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THE LIFE EVERLASTING

THE LIFE EVERLASTING

Studies in the Subject of the Future

BY

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EDINBURGH

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET

1905

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED

FOR

T. & T. CLARK, EDINBURGH
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, AND CO. LIMITED
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

TO
THE MEMORY
OF MY
FATHER AND MOTHER

PREFACE.

THE aim of the writer in these pages has been a threefold one, as the line of thought will show.

It is partly Apologetic, for no study of the ever-present subject of the Life to Come can overlook the testimony of Science and Literature, or the recent conclusions of the critical study of the New Testament. It is also Expository, for there is no real sustenance for our Christian Hope except in the words of Scripture, above all in those of our Lord Himself. It is meant to be Practical, for it is the writer's conviction that there is no subject more earnestly discussed at the present time by all classes of people.

While the book is written in the interests of the general reader, the writer has kept an open eye for the recent utterances of original

scholars and thinkers who have the best right to speak on the subject. Perhaps the volume may also serve a consolatory purpose in the experience of those who have been bereaved, and who feel that they need the comfort of our Christian Hope.

BELFAST, *December* 1904.

CONTENTS.



THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
FORESHADOWED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . . .	I

CHAPTER II.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY CHRIST . . .	23
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

RESTING ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST . . .	49
---	----

THE RESURRECTION.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION . . .	71
--	----

CHAPTER V.

THE STING OF DEATH	115
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI.

ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RESURRECTION . . .	133
--	-----

THE FUTURE LIFE.

CHAPTER VII.		PAGE
A VICTORY OF FAITH		153
CHAPTER VIII.		
A TRIUMPH OF LOVE		169
CHAPTER IX.		
A CONQUEST OF HOPE		185

IMMORTALITY IN LITERATURE.

CHAPTER X.		
THE ATTITUDE OF SCIENCE		205
CHAPTER XI.		
THE VERDICT OF PHILOSOPHY		231
CHAPTER XII.		
THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY		247
INDEX		263

THE LIFE EVERLASTING.



CHAPTER I.

FORESHADOWED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

“O that Thou wouldest hide me in Sheol, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me ! If a man die, shall he live again ?”—JOB.

“I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living.”—ISAIAH.

“But I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth :
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God.”—JOB.

“An Old Testament Believer’s Death-bed ; or, The Difference Christ has made.”

“A struggle of human piety against the unrelieved fear of death.”—G. A. SMITH.

“I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.”—PSALMIST.

CHAPTER I.

FORESHADOWED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

WHEN St. Paul says that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light, the statement implies that life and immortality, in other words the doctrine of the resurrection, required to be brought to light. It was obscurely present even in the religion of the Old Testament, nearly as much so as in that of other ancient peoples. The Old Testament preparation was almost as imperfect as the ethnic preparation. There are two possible lines of thought with regard to the doctrine of immortality as taught in the Old Testament. On the one hand, we may read the New Testament into the Old, and credit the Hebrews, as older religious writers did, with a complete belief in immortality. Or, yielding to the critical spirit of modern times in its extreme

form, we may deny that the doctrine of immortality exists in the Old Testament even in germ. The truth in this, as in most similar cases, lies between these two positions: and it may be illustrated by an incident which happened some years ago. In connection with the death of the inventor of one of our great illuminants, sermons were preached the following Sunday by two well-known ministers. The preacher of the morning dealt with the subject of immortality in the Old Testament, and took the old view that it was a fully developed belief of the Hebrews. The preacher in the evening selected as his text the words about life and immortality being brought to light, and avoided coming into collision with the opinions of the morning preacher by saying something like this: "doubtless there are references to the hope of Immortality in the Old Testament; but just as he whose death we are this day remembering with sorrow, found embedded in the caverns of the earth the dark substance by which he has illuminated the homes of rich and poor in many lands, so did Christ bring to light the hope of a future life. The shale was in the earth long before, but it was our friend who revealed

its illuminating power. Even so the hope of immortality, embedded in Old Testament passages, as we were so well told in the morning, was practically unrevealed until He appeared who brought life and immortality to light." That incident illustrates the position which we are justified in taking with reference to this subject, namely, that the Old Testament maintains a prevailing silence in regard to a future life, broken by occasional voices which utter what have been termed "cries flung out in revolt from the thought of a future without God." Or, to put it otherwise, the darkness is broken by occasional gleams of light.

I.

There is no doubt about the prevailing silence. One feels it very specially in the hopeless wail that sounds through many a psalm. "In death there is no remembrance of Thee : in Sheol who shall give Thee thanks ?" ¹ "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ? Shall the dust praise Thee ? shall it declare Thy truth ?" ² "For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate

¹ Ps. vi. 5.

² Ps. xxx. 9.

Thee : they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth.”¹ And the striking thing is that the gloom is thickest in those very utterances which to a Christian mind so strongly suggest a future life. To such a mind there could be no grander hymn of life and immortality than the Ninetieth Psalm, with its thought that in God, the dwelling-place of all generations, man that is of few days finds refuge alike from the brokenness and brevity of human life. A *Christian* writer is entitled to say : “this may be the cry of a generation worn out with wanderings, and sick with disappointed hopes, and sated with plagues, dropping down one after another like an enchanted caravan in the wilderness ; but it is fit to be the cry and the confession and the prayer of a worn and heavy-laden race to God, under whose anger it perishes.”² But this is reading a Hebrew psalm with Christian eyes. The horizon of the singer—and this is all the more striking if we are to trust the persistent tradition that the psalm is a prayer of Moses, the man of God—is that of this present life. The prayer of the psalm is that

¹ Isa. xxxviii. 18.

² Davidson's *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 444.

we may rejoice and be glad *all our days*. The immortality which the writer seems to crave is an immortality of influence. Jehovah is the dwelling-place of His people from generation to generation, but there is no vision to the Psalmist of the thought of God as the eternal dwelling-place of individual souls. The three-score years and ten of human life are passed in God's anger, and they fly away with a brevity set forth in multiplied imagery. God carries us away as with a flood: we live and die like the grass of the field: the days of our years are threescore years and ten, which at the best are but labour and sorrow: and what prospect is there at the end? The crushing dust!

Or if we turn to "the writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness," we see an advance upon the sentiment of the Ninetieth Psalm, in that he recognises, in suffering and affliction, the things "by which men live"; yet, as Dr. G. A. Smith has shown, this is the Hebrew poem which of all others lets us see "the difference Christ has made."¹ It is needless to multiply quotations of this kind to illustrate the prevailing silence of the Old Testament

¹ *The Book of Isaiah*, by Rev. G. A. Smith, D.D., i. 376.

regarding a future life. The phrases which became the current coin of Hebrew speech, such as 'the land of the living,' 'the land of forgetfulness and of the shadow of death,' breathe the same note of scarcely undisguised despair.

In nothing is the prevailing darkness so manifest as in the Hebrew beliefs regarding death, the state and place of the dead. The Old Testament 'Sheol,' whether we regard it as derived from the verb 'to ask' or from the adjective signifying 'hollow,' is a bold creation of Hebrew imagination. Either of these possible derivations sufficiently explains the language of horror in which it is so often described. According to the one, it is the hollow realm referred to variously as 'the lower parts of the earth,' 'a region of darkness,' 'the lowest hell.' According to the other, it is the place which is continually saying, 'give, give,'—the insatiable devourer of men. Sheol is not the grave, but the grave's mouth, a vast underground mausoleum decked out in Hebrew language with all the horrors of the grave. It is the abode of departed—of all departed—personalities. "The small and great are there: there the prisoners are at

ease together: there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest."¹ All generations, and all men and women, without reference to moral distinctions, went at death to this great rendezvous of the departed. It was the place where Jacob looked forward to being with his son, and David with his child. It was the place where all Israelites were 'gathered to their fathers,' a fine phrase certainly, and yet it falls with a comforting sound only on Christian ears. For there was neither comfort nor moral significance in the thought of the Hebrew Sheol. It conveyed no idea to the mind except that of being a place where the departed existed, but in which, so far as can be judged, the personality was left 'feeble and flaccid.' Life in Sheol, in the thought of the Hebrew, was drowsy and silent; but dabblers in necromancy—like the witch of Endor when she sought to satisfy the curiosity of Saul by summoning the prophet Samuel from the unseen world—believed in the possibility of the departed coming back from Sheol to earth. On the whole, it was most truly, in Hebrew thought, a place of shades. It is particularly

¹ Job iii. 17-19.

to be remembered that there was no distinction between good and evil in Sheol. The Hebrew did not associate either bliss or misery, but only the thought of bare existence, with the unseen world. The conception of lost souls being tormented in Sheol is a much later one, and is reflected in the imagery of the parable of Lazarus and Dives. But the dreariest idea connected with the Hebrew Sheol is that in it all connection with God as well as with the outer world is cut off. It is the place where fellowship with God ceases, where the dead cannot praise Him.¹ And that is why those occasional gleams of immortality, which came to individual souls, always took the form of a revolt against the breach of fellowship with God which death seemed to involve. The

¹ There is a remarkable coincidence between the Hebrew Sheol and the Hades of early Greek literature. Like Sheol, it has no typography except that it also is conceived of as an underworld of unrelieved gloom, in which existence is as dreary as the place, and souls survive as the mere images or shades of what the men were on the earth. As in the case of Sheol, all go down equally to Hades, Agamemnon and Achilles, with their basest serfs: all have the same gloomy existence there, and there is deliverance for none. "The early Hellenic doctrine is hesitating, fragmentary, inconsistent, barren of hope divorced from vital religious interest." *Vide* Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 129; fifth edition, p. 104.

one point at which for our purpose the Hebrew doctrine of Sheol is most interesting, is the protest which it involves against any thought of personal extinction in the unseen world. Advocates of a doctrine of annihilation must go elsewhere than to the Old Testament for evidence of their belief. The prevailing darkness of the Old Testament in regard to immortality justifies the remark, that "it is well for us sometimes to pitch our religious life in terms which do not include the hope of a future."¹ And the fact that intensely pious Hebrew souls were able to maintain their religious life without a clear vision of immortality, may suggest to ourselves whether, after all, we have not been too indebted to other-worldly considerations for its maintenance.

When we come to inquire into the reasons for the prevalent silence of the Old Testament, we find ourselves face to face with a variety of considerations.

The chief of these is, that much which is said in the Old Testament regarding immortality is spoken of Israel *as a people*. In this as in other connections we are impressed

¹ *Modern Criticism*, etc., p. 213.

with the small place given in the Old Testament to the individual. When immortality is spoken of, especially by the prophets, what is thought of is the immortality of the nation, which will be entered on at what is so frequently referred to as 'the day of the Lord.' Therefore, for the most part, immortality in the Old Testament is not raised in connection with the question of death at all. When the day of the Lord dawns, Israel as a nation will share in the general transfiguration which shall come not only to Israel, but to all nature. So much is said to this effect, especially by the prophets, that the question must arise to every student of the Old Testament: are individuals in Israel regarded as immortal, or is the only conceivable immortality that of Israel as a people? The answer, of course, is, that the immortality of individuals could hardly be taught, or even imagined, until such time as, in Hebrew thinking, the individual should come to his own. It has frequently been pointed out, but most fully by the late Professor Davidson, that this took place in connection with the breaking up of the Jewish State. Again and again in his *Old Testament Theology* he emphasises the fact that "the downfall of

the kingdom of Judah was the longest step taken towards Christianity since the Exodus.”¹ Hence it is that the clearest utterances of Hebrew writers date from a period later than the Exile. The obscurity of this doctrine in the early ages of Hebrew history may be confidently set down to the small place then given to, and the inadequate conception entertained of, the individual in Israel. “The individual Israelite was content to have poured his little stream of life and service into the tide of national life, and in some degree to have swelled it.”

Another reason for the prevailing silence, is the distinctive Hebrew doctrine of retribution. It is a subject of frequent remark, that retribution must take place, according to the Hebrew, within the compass of this life. “Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth : how much more the wicked and the sinner ?”² These three words, *in the earth*, in connection with the Hebrew idea of retribution, go far to explain the limitation of Hebrew hopes. It is the thought of retribution in this life that explains, and goes a long way

¹ *Old Testament Theology*, p. 408, etc.

² Prov. xi. 31.

in helping us to excuse, the ferocious language of what we call 'the cursing psalms.' Not only is it undesirable that the Christian should allow these psalms to become part of the materials of his devotion: it is simply impossible for him to use them. Their impatience of the slowness of Divine Providence, the fierceness of their imprecations, and, from a Christian point of view, the impiety of these psalms, find their only explanation in the fact that the Hebrew could not see beyond the horizon of this life. If God is to vindicate Himself, in making it well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, the Hebrew psalmist feels it must be done at once, and in these psalms he prays accordingly. There is every reason why the Christian reader should explain and excuse the language of the cursing psalms; there is also every reason why he should shrink from the sentiments they express. It goes with this, that it is the habit of the Hebrew psalmist to regard 'length of days' as the highest blessing for which he can ask; and the promise, 'with long life will I satisfy him,' is regarded in the psalms as the greatest blessing of God. Why a Christian should pray to be delivered from sudden death it is

not easy to see, but on the lips of the Hebrew it was a quite intelligible petition.

But the strongest reason for the prevalent silence of the Old Testament regarding a future life, as we think of it, is that to the Hebrew believer the all-important element of religion was fellowship with God. This is the real reason why it seems strange to us that the best Old Testament saints should have been satisfied with the conditions of a religious life with God upon the earth. What appealed to them was not what specially strikes us, namely, the imperfect condition of such a religious life, but the fact that it was a life lived in fellowship with God. As already hinted, the pitch of intensity at which the present life of fellowship with God was lived by Hebrew saints, is a suggestion to us that we too often seek motives for piety from other-worldly considerations. When a Hebrew soul grasped the thought of immortality, it was to him immortality with a religious significance, the continuance beyond the grave of the life he had already lived with God upon earth. The pious Hebrew did not concern himself about the mere existence of the soul after death. This he never doubted: it is implied even in his conception of Sheol.

When his spirit breaks the limits of Hebrew religion, which it occasionally does, the immortality that dawns upon him is one which constrains him to say, "In *Thy* presence is fulness of joy." It comes to this, in other words, that "in the Old Testament immortality is the corollary of religion. The prophets and saints of the Old Testament were not speculative men: they did not reason that the soul was immortal from its nature: this was not the kind of immortality in which they were interested: they did not lay stress on man's distinctive hope of immortality. They did not reason, they felt; and they said, 'I *know* that my Redeemer liveth.'"¹

II.

But there are occasional gleams with which the prevailing darkness of the Old Testament is here and there relieved. Where the conviction of personal immortality was attained, it was reached by individual souls who had been led along the line of moral and spiritual piety to a peculiarly intimate personal

¹ *Old Testament Theology*, p. 411.

fellowship with God. While, therefore, we may feel pity for the Hebrew saints, who had so slight a grasp of immortality, we cannot but admire them when we remember how near they got to God without it. And that, let it be remembered, is just the point. To the Hebrew believer, communion with God stood in the place of immortality. It is this fact which justifies the observation that immortality is "one of the secondary and inferential elements of religious experience." To us it is by no means 'secondary or inferential,' but a primary and essential conviction of the believer in the Fatherhood of God. To the Christian it is bound up with the very idea of religion. But in the sense in which this statement is made it is quite true. It is stated, in an inferential way, in a single sentence by the prophet Habakkuk: "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die."¹ God liveth; God is mine: that was immortality to the pious Hebrew. Therefore the authors of the *Unseen Universe* very truly remark: "It was not from the want, but from the excess of religion, that this void was left in the Jewish mind. The future life

¹ Hab. i. 12.

was overlooked, because it was overshadowed by the consciousness of the presence of God Himself."

Let us now examine some of the utterances of Hebrew poets to whom the hope of individual immortality, based upon the sense of their personal relation to God, was a real discovery. They are of the nature of protests against death, as interrupting the fellowship with God which is life. And they all occur, it is to be remembered, in somewhat late writings.

By the consent of many scholars, the most distinctive utterance of a Hebrew psalmist regarding immortality is to be found in the Sixteenth Psalm, which teaches that those who are in perfect fellowship with God shall not die. To this singer the tie between God and himself is so indissoluble, that he is convinced that the Lord will not abandon him at death. Sheol, which openeth her mouth wide to swallow him, will not get the permanent possession of his soul; and he shall escape the corruption of 'the pit.' This is such a perfect expression of the assurance of immortality, as springing from conscious union with God, that we do not wonder at the application made of it by St. Peter at Pentecost to the resurrection of Christ.

There is one sentence in the Seventeenth Psalm—"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness"—which, though of somewhat doubtful interpretation, is referred "to the awakening out of death when God has brought in His perfect kingdom, which departed saints would live again to share."¹

All writers on this subject have noticed the pathetic use of the word 'take' in the Forty-ninth and Seventy-third Psalms: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall take me." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward take me to glory." The phrase in both psalms is a fine expression of the hope of the believing mind in its relation to God. Many see in it a reflection of the description of the death of Enoch: "He was not; for God took him."

Unquestionably the most significant passage, as it is one of the most difficult of interpretation, is the utterance of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in after time (or, as an after man) will stand upon the earth: and after my skin which is destroyed—this here, even without my flesh shall I see God: whom

¹ *Old Testament Theology*, p. 466.

I shall see, and my own eyes behold, and not another's." ¹ In this passage, with all its difficulties, two things come clearly into view,—that Job's conscience demands some visible vindication of his innocence, and that he is convinced that he shall see his Redeemer, who shall appear on his behalf. And as it is quite plain that he does not anticipate that these two things will take place within the compass of this life, his firm conviction that they shall come to pass is to be taken as evidence that he believed in another. What was expressed by Job as a presentiment in the preceding chapters, becomes here a distinct assurance: "I know; I shall see." This expressed certainty relates to that which shall concern him after death. "Without my flesh shall I see God." "My own eyes shall behold Him, and not another's." This, of course, does not mean that others shall not share the vision of God, but that Job most certainly shall have it.

From these occasional utterances it will be seen that the assertion of immortality on the part of individual Hebrew writers largely took the form of a protest against the fact of death, of a demand for a continuous life; a life

¹ Job xix. 25-27.

which at the moment called death, would take a leap across Sheol to God. It is not surprising, therefore, that the protest against the fact of death is found late in the history of Hebrew literature. In earlier periods the saint did not fight death. He had so little of a place as an individual, that he was lost among the people. But when the sense of personality became strong among the Hebrews, after the dissolution of the Jewish State, the person who felt that he was in fellowship with God demanded that this fellowship should pass through death uninterrupted. The further we come down the stream of Hebrew literature, the protest takes more distinctly the form of the expression of a new conviction, namely, that dying is not death. The Hebrew writer begins to analyse the popular conception of death, and denies its truth. To the popular mind in Israel, dying and the state after death were one. As the individual mind rose above this, there was an earnest assertion that the soul, in dying, does not descend into Sheol, but overleaps the place of the dead. We saw this in the use of the word 'take' or 'receive' by certain psalmists. But the more clearly it came to be felt that the pious person was

received by God, the more pressing became the question which arose out of the observation of bodily decay. And so we find that the ripe and final expression of the hope of a future life by certain of the Hebrew prophets, came to be nothing short of a belief in the resurrection of the body. Dimly foreshadowed by Hosea and Isaiah, with whom the expression of it is largely poetic, it was distinctly embodied by Ezekiel in his vision of the resurrection of the Jewish State, which carries with it the promise not only of a corporate resurrection of Israel, but of individual Israelites as well. What has been said sufficiently verifies the statement made at the outset, that life and immortality, which together constitute the Christian doctrine of resurrection, required to be brought to light. While one saint here or there, one psalmist or two among many, had what might be called fore-gleams of immortality, it still remains true that Christ brought life and immortality to light. In the Old Testament our Christian hope appears here and there like a star in the sky. In the New Testament it floods the whole atmosphere like the sunlight.

CHAPTER II.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY CHRIST.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.”

“Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ.”—ST. PAUL.

“When sickness undresses man for death, then Job’s *I know*, and St. Paul’s *I desire*, are the words of sweetest comfort.”—H. MONTAGUE.

“I shall behold Thee face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here still wast Thou.”

BROWNING.

“To see Christ is bliss : to know Him, life : to love Him, happiness :
to possess Him, heaven.”

“Up, then, my heart !
To Thee, my Jesus only,
Till when I part
On my last journey lonely,
Safe from all harms
Thy blood shall shield me dying,
Till in Thine arms
I wake to find me lying.”

From the ROMAUNSCH.

CHAPTER II.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY CHRIST.

WE are now in a position to understand more clearly the significance of St. Paul's words, "Jesus Christ who hath brought immortality to light." There are various ways in which we may endeavour to show 'the difference Christ has made.' We may look at the inscriptions from Roman temples, as these are to be seen in the gallery of the Vatican, and set them side by side with inscriptions from Christian catacombs; and when we do so we feel the contrast between the dreary refrain of the one, "farewell, farewell, and for ever farewell," and the triumphant note of the other, "he who dies in Christ dies in peace and hope." Or we may compare the hesitating note in pagan literature, which speaks of 'a certain presentiment of immortality,' of the hope of a future life as 'a raft on which we sail perilously through life,' with the tone of St. Paul's triumphant assertion: "now is Christ

risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." In either case we feel that, while apart from Christ we have only suggestions of eternal hope, He gives us the assurance of immortality. But we must admit that this assurance comes only to those who are already convinced of the truth of Christianity. Apart from that, it is impossible to be made perfectly sure of the life everlasting. It is impossible to prove immortality to a demonstration. The Christian faith in eternal life has very little concern either with the arguments of the philosopher or the investigations of the scientist. Therefore, apart from the testimony of Christ, we must speak with caution regarding the evidence for immortality. To those who are already convinced of the credibility of the Christian faith, the corroborative testimony of science, philosophy, poetry, the withheld completions of life, and the foretokens of immortality that have been given to individual men and women, are infinitely precious: to others, they must be only irritating. The faith in immortality is distinctly a Christian faith. "Christ hath brought immortality to light." The Christian testimony to the life everlasting turns upon four points.

Immortality is bound up with the fact of Christ: it is promised to us on the word of Christ: as a Christian belief it rests on the resurrection of Christ: and the eternal future is clear only in Christ.

I.

Immortality is bound up with the fact of Christ. What is 'the fact of Christ'? It is a fact of history, of conscience, and of spiritual experience. The witness of history to Christ is its testimony to the appearance and career in this world of One so unique in character and life, that the saying of Charles Lamb could be uttered of Him: "If Shakespeare were to enter the room, we should rise up to meet him: if Jesus were to come into it, we should instinctively fall down and worship." The witness of history to Christ is to a Being who does not rank as one of the group of the world's great ones, but who is solitary, who cannot be classified, who is simply—Jesus. Such a Being, it is plain, cannot be studied with moral neutrality. The question, 'What think ye of Christ?' shades into the other, 'What shall I do

then with Jesus?' Christ thus becomes a fact of conscience. "The nearer we come to Him, the more does He become the instructor of our conscience."¹ We cease to judge Him, for we feel that He is judging us. We are drawn into an attitude towards Him which we take to no other person. We feel that religion depends not only on what He *was*, but on what He *is*. At this point we discover that the fact of history and the fact of conscience is becoming a fact of spiritual experience. For Jesus is more than a master in morals to anyone who studies 'the Fact of Christ.'² We get to the point reached by His apostle when he said: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And do not let us miss the link, subtle but strong, in this confession, between the *words* and the *person* of the Master. Many in our day have shown clear insight into the 'words,' the teaching of Jesus, who have not recognised the link between His 'words' and Himself. What Peter joined together let us not put asunder,

¹ Herrmann, *Faith and Morals*, p. 41.

² "The moral ideal does not rise above Him, for He makes it visible to us as something inexhaustible which lays hold of our hearts and minds, and He makes us feel most deeply how far we ourselves are from it." Herrmann, *Faith and Morals*, p. 42.

the unique *person* who spoke *words* of eternal life. When we recognise the connection between the two, the fact of Christ acquires the meaning for us which it had for His apostles. We remember the dying wish of Socrates, for a sure 'word of eternal life' for which he might exchange 'the frail raft' of his dim conjecture regarding immortality. And in and by Him, of whom Peter asked, 'to whom shall we go,' we feel that 'the word' has been spoken. Jesus becomes a fact of spiritual experience the longer we study Him as a fact of history. He is the answer to the cry, "show us the Father." He becomes the foundation of faith in the living God. For faith rests not on the ideas of Jesus, but on the fact of Christ. Christianity is not a mere idealism: it is an induction from facts, and the central fact is Christ Himself. For spiritual experience leads to the next and final step, which, however incredible it seems, becomes inevitable: if Christ brings us to God, it is because He *is* God. The writer of *The Fact of Christ*¹ has said: "If this be so, what then? There is only a *dernier*

¹ *The Fact of Christ*, by P. Carnegie Simpson, M.A., especially chapter iv.

ressort. It was reached at a very early stage of Christian thought by a writer of inspired insight, who seized his pen and, without argument or explanation, wrote, '*The Word was God.*'"¹ As Herrmann puts it, "When we confess His Deity, we simply give Him His right name." It comes to this, then, that Christ is a fact: that this involves the incarnation; and the incarnation involves immortality. Could we imagine the Eternal Son of God becoming man, if the individual is no more than a creature of threescore years and ten, or if the human race is to perish with this planet? "At the end of life is the fact of death. That is a very real and great fact, so great and real that any true or satisfying view of life must take account of death and have something to say about it. The fact of Christ does so. The ultimate meaning of Christ is a future meaning. Of that we know very little: it is one of those places where even the true religion hardly takes us out of agnosticism. But if Christ's meanings here for character, for faith, for conscience, are true promises, that meaning of Christ who is to come will be than anything in this life a 'far

¹ *The Fact of Christ*, p. 111.

better.'"¹ So St. Paul said: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We are taken back therefore to the elementary position that the immortality of which we can give no scientific demonstration flows from our conviction regarding the character of God. If God is, if He is the Father of our spirits, immortality becomes our birthright. Professor Jowett therefore could speak of "the inseparable connection of such a doctrine with the existence of a God."² Assured not only of His existence but of His character, Christian faith knows that He keeps the keys of the grave, and that the departed have fallen asleep in the hope of an eternal awaking.

II.

Immortality is promised to us on the word of Christ. By this we do not mean that Jesus said very much about the life to come. His reserve regarding immortality is as impressive as are the words He did speak regarding it. He

¹ *The Fact of Christ*, p. 184.

² "If God exists, then the soul exists after death; and if there is no God, there is no existence of the soul after death." Jowett's *Plato*, 30. (ed. 2) 186.

says little, and that little is spoken in figures. His main concern is to assure us of the fact of eternal life. As to the mode of our existence in the life to come, or the nature of the resurrection body, or the permanence of personal identity, or the reunion and mutual recognition of the departed, or even the place of their abode,—in regard to all these questions our Lord has only a negative word to speak, but there is more in His negative than in the positive of any other teacher. “If it were *not* so, I would have told you.” We may account in two ways for the reserve of the Christian revelation on this subject. It is due partly to the fact that Christ has nothing for mere curiosity. His silence is therefore a most suggestive condemnation of telepathy and the kindred surmisings by which men try to pick the lock. Christ’s reserve is also to be accounted for, because immortality is really one of His *assumptions*. Jesus Christ everywhere assumes immortality. “He passes by all theoretic questions regarding the soul’s endlessness. He gives no proof of the certainty of a future existence: He presupposes that existence.”¹ The whole subject of the assump-

¹ Salmond, *Christian Doctrine*, etc., p. 296; fifth edition, p. 237.

tions of Christ is an interesting study. Immortality is only one of several central truths which in His teaching are simply assumed. He assumes the depravity of man's heart in a parenthesis: 'if ye being evil.' He assumes the certainty of the last judgment by the frequent use of the simple phrase, 'in that day.' And He everywhere assumes immortality. This is more significant to us than if He had furnished a logical proof of it. He well knew that of such a truth no logical proof was needed. Those to whom He spoke had within them the highest proof of what He said. Their souls answered the appeal He made to them, as an echo answers to the voice. We speak of Christ's teaching on the subject of immortality, but "the truth He came to reveal is to be found in His history as well as in His teaching" . . . "He is Himself the resurrection and the life . . . The final reply to our demand for immortality is this historical manifestation of God and of life in the person and work of Christ."¹ His divine life on earth is the final evidence of immortality.

But there is one word of Jesus which comes

¹ Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 292; fifth edition, p. 234.

to us so truly as the utterance of One who knows, of One who is not discussing a problem but announcing a fact, that we may take it from Him as the word of promise on which He has caused us to hope. It is contained in that chapter which of all others has most surely sustained this hope in Christian hearts, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."¹ We had better, perhaps, at once dispose of the critic at our elbow before building any argument upon these verses. What has criticism to say about 'the fourteenth chapter of John'? Can we be sure that these are the genuine words of Christ? We are not sorry to have to ask these questions: for as we are able to speak of a changed attitude of science to faith, so are we able to speak of a very changed attitude of criticism to the Fourth Gospel. Not to speak of the magnificent defence of it which has recently been given by Principal

¹ John xiv. 2-4.

Drummond,¹ we may quote for our purpose the words of Professor Wendt, who has subjected the Fourth Gospel to a microscopic examination, when he says of the chapters containing the farewell words of Jesus: "the charges and words of consolation which Jesus here gives to His disciples breathe the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus as revealed to us in the Synoptics. They may be taken unreservedly as utterances of the historic Jesus."² This is very welcome testimony, though even if it were not forthcoming it would take more criticism than we have ever met, to shake our faith in words which are more self-assuring, as the words of the Master, than any other.

The circumstances in which these words were spoken are familiar and memorable. They form one of the utterances of Jesus in the upper room the night before the Cross. They come to us, therefore, laden with all the pathos of a farewell. Last words are difficult to utter; and because our hearts are too full for the expression of our feeling at such a time, we are silenced by our very eagerness to speak.

¹ *An Enquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, by James Drummond, D.D.

² *Gospel according to St. John*, H. H. Wendt, pp. 191, 206.

But it was otherwise with Jesus the night before He died. Never was it more true of Him than on that memorable evening that He spake as never man spake.. Never more perfectly did He adapt Himself to the position and prospects and needs of His disciples than on that last evening which they spent together. It was not that He said much about the parting, for His words are marked by a divine reserve, and there is nothing sensational or sentimental in them, but they have a real power of comfort and support. Not in the world's poor way does He tell His disciples to bear up, but as One who has looked over the chasm that separates time from eternity; as One who has not only looked over it but bridged it; as One who not only believes in, but has the power to give eternal life, He says: "let not your hearts be troubled. . . . In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were *not* so, I would have told you."

One cannot help contrasting two scenes in history that rise up before our memory together. They have much in common, but there is one all-important point of contrast between them. Socrates taking farewell of his

followers, and Jesus of His disciples, are in many respects companion pictures. In both we have the same devotion of a master to his disciples, and of disciples to a master. The masters resemble one another in purity of life and in devotion to truth for truth's sake. The disciples resemble each other in their attachment to the master, and in their sincere regret at the thought of parting with him. And the two scenes suggest one another, because in both the subject of conversation was the same. Both masters spoke to their disciples of a life beyond the present. The similarity goes one step further, for it can be said that both masters believed in a life to come. But at this stage the resemblances disappear in the all-important point of contrast. The Athenian teacher discusses the question of immortality with his friends ; and though he strongly asserts the likelihood of a life to come, it is still for him and them a subject for discussion. But in the upper room, and at the supper table, there is no discussion by the Master of an unsettled question. Jesus does not announce an opinion about immortality, but boldly takes upon Him to assure His disciples of the fact. He speaks at once with a tone of authority and under a

deep sense of responsibility, feeling that even He dare not raise hopes which He is not able to gratify, "if it were not so, I would have told you." The great difference between the Sage and the Saviour is this: to the one immortality is only a splendid 'perhaps'; to the other it is a 'fact,' and He claims to be the Teacher come from God to announce it. The dying words of Socrates have been referred to: "Would that we could more securely and less perilously sail upon a stronger vessel or some divine word!" There is no more pathetic utterance of antiquity than this. Surely we Christians can claim—and with 'the fourteenth of John' before us we are justified in claiming—that the word which Socrates longed to hear has been spoken, that the vessel for which he would fain have exchanged the frail raft of his conjecture has been built. How many have died calmly resting on this simple word of Jesus! How many have ridden out to meet the last great storm clinging to the promise which these great words contain! For if this word of Jesus, spoken with such calm confidence on the very eve of the Cross, when all seemed lost, when failure seemed to be written as by the finger of fate upon His life,—if this does not

give the assurance of the life to come, one does not know what else will.

And yet there is nothing in this message of Jesus that amounts to a description of the nature of the life to come. His one concern is to send us away from the upper room sure of the fact. The little He does say on other points is spoken in figures. There is the assurance that in that life there shall be *no misplacements*. "I go to prepare a place for you." When we think how many people there are who never seem to get their true place on earth; when the feeling sometimes comes over us that we ourselves are hardly in our place; when we feel that work has been given us which we never expected to have to do, and that there are within us ungratified longings for opportunities that have never really come within our reach; when we feel, as many of us cannot but feel, that we have been, as we say, misplaced, we thank God for the word of Jesus which tells us that in the life to come each shall go to his own place.

And that place is being *prepared*. Christ not only reveals to us the future, but speaks of Himself as our Guide to it: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Into this intimacy

with God, this freedom of the Universe, this entirely attractive heaven, we are introduced by Christ; He has gone on before to make ready for those whom He has summoned to come after Him. This of itself is enough to give us hopeful thoughts of the future state. Christ is busied in preparing for us what will give us satisfaction and joy. When we expect a guest we love and have written for, we take pleasure in preparing for his reception: we hang in his room the picture he likes: if he is infirm we wheel in the easiest chair: we gather the flowers he admires, and set them on his table: we go back and back to see if nothing else will suggest itself to us, so that when he comes he may have entire satisfaction. This is enough for us to know, that Jesus is similarly occupied. He knows our tastes, our capabilities, our attainments, and He has identified a place as ours and holds it for us.”¹

How very welcome also is the thought suggested in the image, ‘*house of many mansions*’! This is His own answer given in His own time to that question which was put to Him by one who asked, “are there few that

¹ *Gospel of St. John*, by Marcus Dods, D.D., ii. 116, 117.

be saved?" Few that be saved! Nay verily; He is bringing many sons unto glory, from every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. "They are gathering homeward from every land," and for all of them, whatever be the colour of their faith or of their skin, there will be house room in the many-mansioned home.

But even Jesus has no answer to give to the many questions which we wish we could have asked Him concerning the life everlasting. We all know what it is, in silent moments after some loved one has been taken from us, when the door which separates us from them has been closed, to question our hearts about the life on which they have entered. But it is just here that we must bow reverently to the divine reserve, and absolutely refuse the help of anything but the divine word. All these questionings of the heart are covered for us by the assurance, "if it were *not* so, I would have told you." "We can believe even where we have not seen. Those pure affections, which are among the holiest things God has given us here: those voices of the heart to which He Himself has given utterance in every human breast, will never be denied or

disappointed by Him. If it were not so, He would have told us. Immortality is no dream, it is the most blessed of realities : those who sleep in Christ will God bring with Him : and we shall one day behold and recognise again the blessed household countenances cleansed from the dishonours of the grave."

III.

Immortality, as a Christian belief, rests on the resurrection of Christ. But can the resurrection of Christ be proved? Reserving this for subsequent discussion, it is sufficient now to say that if the resurrection of Christ were any other fact of history, the evidence would be regarded as indisputable. It is only disputed as a matter of fact, because it seems to us unlikely that one should rise from the dead. But granting that it is unlikely, the question of St. Paul comes in just here, "Why should it be thought *incredible* to you that God should raise the dead?"¹ It is at least most significant that St. Paul, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, which criticism does not dispute, and which is earlier than any

¹ Acts xxvi. 8.

of the gospels, builds an argument for immortality on the resurrection of Christ; and that the subsequent testimonies to the appearances of the risen Saviour in the gospels correspond exactly to St. Paul's conception of the nature and properties of the resurrection body. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the personal testimony of St. Paul as a witness of the resurrection. This also will form the subject of discussion hereafter. Meanwhile it is enough to say that as one can measure the force of a cannon ball not only by its size, but by the force of the impact it makes on what it strikes, so we can measure the force of the Christian faith from the impression it made on a great mind and strong soul like St. Paul's. The reason why the Christian faith in immortality rests on the resurrection, is that it gives our Christian hope its distinctive colour. What a finished statue is to the block of marble, the resurrection is to the general doctrine of immortality. The risen Christ as the first-fruits has wrought immortality into its perfect shape. "The doctrine of the resurrection of the body boldly faces the perplexity as to the connection of a body with personality, which so greatly

troubled ancient speculation on the immortality of the soul.”¹ And therefore even the element of *incredibility* which St. Paul emphasises in his question has been largely removed. For a doctrine of immortality in the sense of the resurrection of the body, is much more credible than a doctrine of bodiless immortality such as St. Paul found himself continually obliged to resist. This also demands fuller consideration, but it may be said now that what formerly rendered the doctrine incredible was the fact that it was bound up with most unnecessary speculations as to a literal bodily resurrection. Once let us see that St. Paul is not teaching the literal resurrection of the body that has been committed to the dust, but rather strongly asserting that God will again clothe the soul with a body, and it ceases to be a thing incredible that God should raise the dead. For then it becomes a question how far the God we have seen in Christ can go. What will He do, or what will He refuse to do, in order to complete our redemption? After the miracle of the incarnation, we are not likely to be made to stumble at the doctrine

¹ Canon Barry in “A Modern Symposium on the Future Life,” *Nineteenth Century*, 1877, p. 503.

of the resurrection of the dead. St. Paul's words are enough: "God giveth it a body, and to every seed His own body." Our belief in the resurrection follows inevitably on our belief in God as revealed in Christ. To raise Christ Jesus from the dead, and to raise us together with Him, is easy to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Him up for us all. Therefore immortality rests, along with the whole of historical Christianity, on the resurrection of Christ. To base our Christian hope on anything else were like standing in a valley and trying to find out by means of a telescope whether the wind is blowing on the mountain top. Let us stand there for ourselves, with our faith resting firmly on the fact of a risen Christ, and the air of eternity will blow in our faces and we shall doubt no more.

IV.

The eternal future is clear to us only in Christ. That is the title of one of Dr. John Ker's sermons—"The Eternal Future clear only in Christ,"—and it sums up the Christian doctrine of immortality. It forms also the last sentence of the Master's great reassuring word,

“I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, ye may be also.” What do these words mean to us? We know what they meant in an immediate sense to the men who heard them spoken. The first in whose experience they were fulfilled was James, and for him He came in the lightning gleam of Herod’s sword. To Peter and Andrew they meant that they should glorify their Lord by being crucified with Him; and to John that the Master should come at length in death, and take the beloved disciple to His bosom again. For us they mean that when the time comes that we must take our last journey, and go forth like Abraham not knowing whither we go, He will come for us Himself; and this last journey, so dreaded in life, will be the shortest and easiest we ever had to take, for it will be in His company. “That where I am, there ye may be also,”—is the final resting thought of the soul regarding the eternal future. To be in heaven is to be where Christ is; to be where Christ is, is to be in heaven; and that is all we know. He is the centre of the soul’s affections. “God’s heaven is made to grow out of Christ, that Christians may not have a single thought about it in which He is not

present." Or, as Richard Baxter has summed it up in the well-known lines :

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim ;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

Whatever it may be for those who have never known Christ, eternal life is for us bound up with Christ : the eternal future is clear *only* in Him. Were it not for Him, our souls would be like a ship tossed till the morning watch. But in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of eternal life, we can sing with gladness :

"For though, from out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

For the morning shall break with His coming. The last entry in Sir Walter Scott's diary was—"We slept reasonably, but on the next morning—" Death broke off the sentence. Could it have been finished more appropriately? "The next morning"—what shall it bring to us? To those who are in Christ it can only bring light, and life, and love for evermore.

CHAPTER III.

RESTING ON THE
RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

“They entered in and found not the body of Jesus.”—ST. LUKE.

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye : for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here : for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”
—ST. MATTHEW.

“I have seen the buried corn,
Underground in Spring-time borne,
Rise with Christ on Easter morn.

So the Christ, and so the corn,
Underground in Spring-time borne,
Rise again on Easter morn.”

W. B. ROBERTSON.

CHAPTER III.

RESTING ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

“The New Testament distinguishes between the Easter message of the empty grave and the appearances of Jesus on the one side, and the Easter faith on the other. Although the greatest value is attached to that message, we are to hold the Easter faith even in its absence. The story of Thomas is told for the exclusive purpose of impressing upon us that we must hold the Easter faith even without the Easter message: ‘Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.’”¹

HERE is an interesting distinction. Is it valid? Is it possible? The Easter faith—What is it? That Christ is still alive, and can be revealed to us as to St. Paul on the way to Damascus. The Easter message—What is it? That Christ rose from the dead the third day, and was afterwards seen of credible witnesses whose testimony is trustworthy. Can these be separated? Harnack says they can. For “the Easter *message* tells us of that wonderful event in Joseph’s garden,

¹ Harnack’s *What is Christianity?* p. 160.

which, however, no eye saw. . . . But the Easter *faith* is the conviction that the Crucified One gained a victory over death, and that He still lives." The essential thing in the Easter faith is not the state in which Christ's grave was found, or the appearances that are said to have taken place afterwards; but that "this grave was the birthplace of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, that there is a life eternal. On the conviction that *Jesus lives* we still base those hopes of citizenship in an Eternal City which make our earthly life worth living and tolerable. . . . Wherever there is a strong faith in the infinite value of the soul, wherever death has lost its terrors, wherever the sufferings of the present are measured against a future of glory, this feeling of life is bound up with the conviction that Jesus Christ has passed through death, that God has awakened Him and raised Him to life and glory. . . . This feeling first established faith in the value of personal life. But of every attempt to demonstrate the certainty of 'immortality by logical process,' we may say in the words of the poet :

"Believe and venture : as for pledges,
The gods give none."

This is interesting and plausible, and for the present distress seems reassuring. But it demands a searching criticism. It is, by the way, the view which was held and advocated by Dr. Martineau, following a hint thrown out by Weizsäcker, that what the disciples experienced was a continuous influence upon their spirits after death by Jesus. Christ lives. "This faith came to them as their consolation after they had recovered from the awful shock of Calvary, just as there comes to all, after the first burst of passionate grief over bereavement, the consolatory thought that the dead one still lives in a better world. It came to them all the sooner because of the commanding personality of Jesus."¹ *Heroes die not*. This was all that the first disciples meant by the resurrection of Jesus. When Paul spoke of having *seen* the Lord, he was only speaking of a strong subjective impression that Jesus was alive: and this, under the craving of the Jew for a sign, became converted into a report of His having appeared to many.

Now, with regard to this attempt to disconnect the Easter faith from the Easter

¹ *Apologetics*, by A. B. Bruce, D.D., p. 394.

message, let it be said at once that if a man can hold the conviction that Christ lives, and that living influences come to his soul from Christ to-day,—without believing that He rose from the dead,—there is no need to quarrel with him. But manifestly, at best, this is only a gospel for a few ; it is also part of a general modern tendency to exalt ideas at the expense of historical facts ; it ignores the connection into which St. Paul brought his faith in a living Christ with *burial* as well as with resurrection ; and it reverses the order of thought in regard to Christianity, which is not that the Christian faith in a living Saviour produced a belief that He rose from the dead, but that the rising from the dead produced the belief in a living Christ. The alternative is inevitable. Did an actually risen Christ originate belief in the continued influence of Jesus? Or did His continued influence originate the belief in a risen Christ? To suppose the latter is simply to hang Christianity in the air ; and a Christianity which is to be stable must not hang in the air, but start from the solid bed rock of historic fact. “A religion which despises historical facts is but a cloudland which must soon be dissipated, or a house built on sand

which the storm will soon sweep away.”¹ For the average man the attempt to hold the Easter faith without the Easter message is vain. For him it means that “Christ is dead, and as far removed from us as dead men are.” And when it comes to that, “the religion of the apostles is gone.”

The attempt to disconnect the Easter faith from the Easter message is not new. It carries us back to the distinguished founder of the Tübingen school; for Dr. Baur emphatically asserted that the belief in a living Christ was what started Christianity on its all-conquering career. But he gave up the attempt to solve the problem as to how the belief arose. The faith of the resurrection he admitted; the fact he denied: the attempt to account for the faith without explaining the fact he ignored. And he was wise. For, to an ordinarily intelligent person, it must seem that it would pass the wit of man to account for a belief in a risen Christ strong enough to float the Christian Church, in any other way than that it sprang from the fact that He rose from the dead. Attempts to account for the one without the other have

¹ *The Training of the Twelve*, by A. B. Bruce, D.D., p. 483.

been numerous. The modern view of Harnack and Martineau overcomes the difficulty, as Baur did, by ignoring it. Do not trouble about the fact: the belief is the main thing. Hold on to the Easter faith: do not inquire about the Easter message. But the human instinct to account for things will not be crushed in that way. Men must and will press the question: if Christ did not actually rise from the dead, how did the first disciples persuade, or delude themselves into believing that He did? "That the disciples supposed they had seen the risen Lord is admitted: that the astonishing revolution, from the deep depression and utter hopelessness of the disciples at the death of Jesus, to the strong faith and enthusiasm with which they proclaimed Him as the Messiah on the succeeding Pentecost, would be inexplicable, unless something extraordinarily encouraging had taken place—something, in fact, which had convinced them of His resurrection, that also is admitted. But that this cause of conviction was precisely a real appearance of the risen Jesus,—that, indeed, it was necessarily an external event at all,—is by no means proved." Renan was the first to advance the theory that the belief in the resurrection was due to the

hallucinations of the women of the sepulchre, who imagined they had seen Jesus risen, and who infected the disciples with their delusion. I need not quote the familiar language of the brilliant Frenchman, who in a style of treatment that is "sentimental, theatrical, Parisian," has tried to show that the Christian Faith was born of "a violent attack of hysterical monomania." He was followed in the same line by the more thoroughgoing German Strauss, who says, with reference to St. Paul's account of the appearances of the risen Christ in 1 Cor. xv.: "When Paul places the appearance which occurred to himself in the same series with the appearances of Jesus in the days after the resurrection, this authorises us, so far as nothing else stands in the way of such an inference, to conclude that, for aught the apostle knew, those earlier appearances were of the same nature with the one experienced by himself."¹ The appearance to Paul, Strauss argues, was subjective, of the nature of a vision, for he was predisposed to visions; therefore, because he classes it with the appearances to Peter and James and the others, we may infer that theirs, too, were

¹ Strauss, *Leben Jesu*, Eng. trans., iii. p. 367.

visions, due partly to excited feelings, partly to long brooding on their Scriptures, and the desire to see the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Messiah should rise again. "The heart thinks, the hour brings: the wish is father to the thought."

As this—and it reappears continually—is the only serious alternative to the belief in an actual resurrection, it is worth our while to look at it seriously.

It is hopelessly at variance with the evangelic tradition. The Gospels do not depict the appearances of the risen Christ as having taken place after a period during which lengthened brooding on the part of the disciples might have conceivably produced them, but as having begun within three days from the Crucifixion, and as having been all over within a month. The visions are supposed to have been produced by old memories awakened by familiar haunts in Galilee. But the earliest appearances are said to have taken place in the Holy City within a few days of the crucifixion. There was no time for the fulfilment of those conditions of delay in the growth of the belief which is an essential part of the theory. Its first condemnation arises from the awkward

circumstance that it does not harmonise with the facts.

It is utterly at variance also with the picture given in the Gospels of the attitude of the disciples when the tidings of resurrection were brought to them. At that time they were in such a depressed state of mind that subjective visions of their Master risen were the last thing in the world likely to befall them. All the Gospels bear testimony to the first disciples having been in this unexpectant attitude. Their mental condition has been compared to that of the Jewish exiles in Babylon when they heard that they were to be restored to their native land. The news of the return in their case, and of the resurrection of Jesus in that of His disciples, seemed too good to be true. With the disciples, grief was calm but hope was dead. At the Galilean manifestation, according to the first Evangelist, when they saw Him they worshipped Him, "but some doubted." When Mary Magdalene told her story of the appearance in the garden, "they believed not." When the two Emmaus travellers appeared at the evening meeting, and told what they had seen, "neither believed they them." At that meeting Jesus rebuked the whole Eleven "for

their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not "the testimony of those who had seen Him. According to St. Luke, the reports of the women were treated by the disciples "as idle tales, and they believed them not." In St. John's narrative, the general incredulity is emphasised in the particular example of it manifested by Thomas, who declared that unless the tests he demanded were forthcoming, "he would not believe." The last thing the women expected when they set forth very early in the morning with the spices, was to find an empty tomb. And when they did find it, Mary voiced their immediate conviction that it had been rifled: "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." They were so unprepared to accept what unbelief represents them as burning to circulate, that they thought Jesus was a ghost. Men who are in the mood to see visions are not usually in the mood to question and disbelieve them. But though this representation of the mental condition of the disciples after Christ's death makes *against* the advocates of all vision theories, it makes *for* the truth of the Easter message in a wonderfully convincing way. The fact that, at first, they doubted the

resurrection unanimously, gives the greatest weight to their subsequent belief in and proclamation of it. Their temporary adoption of the ghost theory, and the quick revulsion from that to the belief in Jesus risen, makes it an impossible theory to us. The power of visions and hallucinations over disordered nerves and excited natures is doubtless great; but it is not accompanied by steady scepticism as to what is imagined. It would produce very different results in relation to spiritualism to-day, if the spirit photographers and implicit believers in phantasms were to stand apart from what they think they have seen, and question the whole thing.

We press the point that, in order to prove a vision theory of belief in Christ's resurrection, the disciples and the women would need to have been on the tiptoe of expectation. They *were*, as the Evangelists tell us, like horses with blinders on, men who were only "inoculated with the faith of a risen Master by the surgery of events. Nothing could change the current of their thoughts—they have taken away my Lord—but a damwork of undeniable fact. Nothing but facts could make such men believe that which nowadays they get credit

for inventing.”¹ Besides, even if the vision theory might conceivably be supposed to explain the belief of some of the witnesses, it cannot possibly account for the unanimous conviction that was ultimately reached by the disciples. Nor can it explain the sudden cessation of the supposed visions. Why did people suddenly cease to have these apparitions? If Jesus did not rise, tarry on earth for a definite season, and then go to the Father, the hallucinations which started the belief that He did would have been produced in endless series. But they ceased. Why? There is only one explanation. Because they were real appearances, and ended in ascension.

This view does no justice to the testimony of St. Paul. It implies that the vision of the risen Christ was the *result*, not the *cause* of his conversion, and that can be made out only by a straining of the narrative which it will not bear. The very greatest importance should be attached to the apologetic value of the testimony of St. Paul. His character, which is manifest to every reader of his works, was one of singular candour, love of truth, and intense moral earnestness. He accepted the

¹ Bruce's *Training*, p. 482.

truth of Christianity in face of the most determined prejudice and prepossession against it. Pfleiderer is possibly right in suggesting that just before his conversion, seeing how entirely Christianity was bound up with the resurrection of Christ, he was engaged in collecting testimony against it; and that the 'kicking against the pricks' was due to his determination to resist the conclusion until it was forced upon him. And surely no man who reads his epistles can retain for any length of time the impression that he was a fanatic, if not an epileptic, carried away by devout enthusiasm. The visions of an epileptic are not the kind of visions which St. Paul records. As Dr. Dods says sharply: "the epileptic idea should be cancelled." If it could be supposed possible to explain the personal belief of St. Paul in this way, that would not account for his belief being shared by others, and it is explicitly stated that not only was St. Paul affected by the vision, but also those who were with him. But St. Paul himself has made it impossible to explain his belief that he had seen Christ as the delusion of a nervous, excitable, probably epileptic person. He distinguishes the objective vision of which he speaks in 1 Cor. xv.,

“last of all He was seen of me also,” from the subjective vision of his soul in a state of rapture in 2 Cor. xii. 2. And St. Paul had the best possible opportunity of exposing the delusion of the resurrection, if such it was. For he was almost if not quite a contemporary of Jesus. His conversion could not possibly have taken place before A.D. 37. Before that he was old enough to have been a persecutor of the Christians. He had held intercourse with Peter and James and other actual apostles of the Lord. We cannot suppose that he confidently quoted them as witnesses without taking pains to ascertain that their witness was true. And that the entire apostolic college—‘The Twelve’—should have been carried away by a hallucination, as well as himself, is, as some one has said, ‘a miracle of the devil’ which far exceeds the miracle of resurrection from the dead. St. Paul then, not to speak of the rest cited by him as witnesses,—and that in an epistle of which no one doubts the genuineness,—declares that he saw the risen Lord. He carried that belief through every kind of circumstance that could compel him to test its reality. He constructed on the basis of this conviction an argument for the resurrection of

the body which no shaft of hostile criticism has been able to pierce. "If Paul were a false witness, whom could we trust?" "I do not think," said the late Mr. R. H. Hutton, "that any reasonable man would reject any fact less than miraculous which came to us with the same sort of evidence as our Lord's resurrection: and were that event not supernatural, the various inconsistencies in the evidence adduced of it would not weigh one jot with any reasonable mind against accepting it. It is very easy to account for differences in the mode of describing a fact not recorded at the time: it is not easy to account for the universal belief, very clearly attested, in any society, that eleven or twelve named persons, with a good many unnamed persons, were witnesses of a very remarkable fact, and made that fact the foundation of their whole subsequent career, on any principle nearly so simple as that it really took place."

Finally, if the resurrection of Christ from Joseph's tomb did not take place, and the apostolic faith was founded on a delusion, why was not the body produced? That it was stolen by the disciples is so manifestly at variance with the accounts given of their

state of mind, that for ages a 'theft theory' was never suggested, and for ages now has not been named. "Men of all schools in modern times would be ashamed to identify themselves with such a suggestion."¹ "Its gratuitous offensiveness is only surpassed by its grotesque inadequacy."² But that discredited theory only enables us to press the question, if Christ did not rise, what became of the body? That it would be allowed to rest in the grave and go to corruption, in face of the gigantic force of Christianity that was built upon the supposition of the resurrection, is inconceivable. It would have been only too easy to identify, with its passion marks upon it; yet the followers of the risen One were not confronted with any such evidence that they were following a delusion. Of course, we are told that it was thrown into the pit along with the bodies of common malefactors; and as it lay for fifty days before Pentecost took place, and the apostles began to preach the resurrection, it could not be produced. But will any one suppose that the belief of the disciples in the resurrection of their Master

¹ Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 385.

² *Christ of History*, by D. W. Forrest, D.D., p. 138.

was not made known till Pentecost? If the gospels are credible at all, the news that He was risen must have been proclaimed within a few days after the Crucifixion. Besides, "even after an interval of fifty days, the body could not have been either lost or unrecognisable: it could have been produced."¹ And if it had been cast into the common pit, why not produce the men who had put it there? But that is to evade the point that the bodies of criminals were given by the Romans to those who claimed them; and Joseph of Arimathea was only following the custom of Roman law in begging for the body of Jesus. All the four gospels relate his request. The tomb in which Jesus was laid was well known, and could have been visited by the Jewish authorities in order to confute His disciples with the fact that He still lay there. No natural explanation of the disappearance of the body of Jesus has ever yet been given. And in the absence of such we are still free to take the angelic explanation: "He is not here: He is risen, even as He said." If unbelief has failed to furnish a credible alternative to the actual resurrection of our Lord, the Easter message holds the

¹ Forrest, *Christ of History*, p. 145.

field. "The physical resurrection remains. It remains, it need not be added, a great mystery."¹ The mystery gathers round the nature of the body in which He rose and appeared unto many. It seems to have been a spiritual body, in which the risen Christ hovered on the border-line of two worlds and revealed the one to the other. If the body of the Crucified was revived, it was also transformed into that body with spiritual properties which St. Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. xv. But in that, too, we have, it seems to me, a fact which is important in Christian apologetic. For there is a striking correspondence between St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection body and the subsequent narratives in the gospels of the manner and mystery, notwithstanding the reality, of the appearances of the risen Christ. But though the body which loving hands laid reverently in Joseph's tomb was transformed in rising again from the grave into a spiritual body,—a body not of humiliation but of glory,—it was still a body in which, with singular unanimity, His disciples recognised and identified their Master as "this same Jesus."

¹ Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 397.

And, for faith, that is the supreme, sufficient fact, the basis on which alone we can rest the confession, 'my Lord and my God.' So we heartily subscribe to the verdict of one of our strongest religious thinkers to-day: "The resurrection created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity: and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him."¹ The day when the Church, hard pressed by the wolves of a remorseless historical criticism, throws to them its belief that Christ rose from the dead, Joseph's tomb shall have become "the grave not of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired."²

¹ A. M. Fairbairn, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, xii. 407

² *Ibid.* xii. 407.

THE RESURRECTION.



CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION.

“Another body! Oh, new limbs are ready,
Free, pure, instinct with soul through every nerve,
Kept for us in the treasures of God.”

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

“If in this life holiness maketh the face of a man to shine by an irradiation from the heart, what shall be the beauty of the body glorified! Surely, though it be not deified, yet shall it be purified, or perfected, and immortalised. Our vile bodies shall be changed and fashioned like His glorious body. Such glory have all His saints.”—H. MONTAGUE.

“Thou who hast made my house of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay :
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,
Be Thou my strength and stay.”

WHITTIER.

“Death, death! It is this harping on death that I despise so much. Without death, which is our crape-like, churchyard word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. For myself, I deny death as the end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead.”—BROWNING (letter to a friend).

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION.

WHEN we come to the testimony of St. Paul, we feel that we are at the heart of the Christian doctrine of immortality, for it is St. Paul who gives to this doctrine its distinctive Christian form. For the most part, in his epistles he addresses people who believed in immortality, and who accepted the resurrection of Christ, but who had not, in his own words, "attained unto the resurrection of the dead." It is in St. Paul's epistles, therefore, that we are brought face to face with that form of the doctrine of immortality which enables us to say, "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

It was this specific form of the doctrine which made St. Paul's teaching a stumbling-block to quick-witted Greeks, who, though not prejudiced against the idea of immortality,

were predisposed to regard the resurrection of the body as a grotesque superstition. Most Greek thinkers never advanced beyond the thought of death as the separation of the soul from the body, as witness the famous thanksgiving of Plotinus that 'he was not tied to an immortal body.' Greek habits of thought left no place for St. Paul's distinctive conception regarding the future life, though it was, of course, not altogether unfamiliar to the Jews. As a Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus must have been brought up in the faith of a doctrine of resurrection. It is in conflict with the denial of the resurrection of the dead on the part of the Corinthians that St. Paul elaborates his distinctive doctrine of immortality. The hinge of the great argument (in 1 Cor. xv.) is the question: "Now, if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"¹ He is arguing with men who fully believed in the resurrection of *Christ*, but who could not be got to understand that this carries with it the resurrection of the *dead*. Hence the line of his argument is to show the consequence of holding one part of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 12.

this belief without the other. It is hardly possible to attach too much importance to the testimony of St. Paul regarding the resurrection of Christ. The value of that testimony is due partly to the character, the history, and the opportunities of the apostle as a witness to the belief in a risen Saviour; and also to the fact that the greater part of his testimony is given in those epistles the date and undisputed genuineness of which render them all important. It is no doubt true that critics of St. Paul's epistles allege that the teaching of the apostle on this subject in his earlier epistles does not harmonise with the epistles written later in his life,—that the idea of resurrection, say, in the epistle to the Philippians, is a spiritualised form of the cruder and more literal doctrine taught in First Corinthians. But, of course, this way of dealing with the supposed development of the apostle's thought is not only essentially modern, but also essentially capricious. It is a purely arbitrary process, by which some modern critics so frequently oblige St. Paul to turn his back upon himself. It is more to the purpose to suppose that it was the need of particular Churches, at the time he wrote

his several epistles, which determined the specific form in which he expressed such doctrines as that of the resurrection. We may confidently presume that St. Paul understood his own theology, and that his own interpretation of it is to be preferred to that of a twentieth-century critic. Therefore it will be observed that we attach no importance to modern critical efforts which assert that St. Paul is occasionally in contradiction with himself on this subject. The undisputed epistles in which he elaborates his belief in the resurrection still stand as the most important monument of the Christian doctrine of immortality, and the teaching in them is beautifully supplemented by that of the later epistles, most notably the epistle to the Philippians. Without, therefore, making any distinction between the earlier and later thought of St. Paul, we shall now proceed to examine his specific contribution to the doctrine of a future life. This may be done by observing that he speaks of resurrection—for that is the distinctive note in his doctrine of immortality—as a fact, a doctrine, a power, and a promise.

I.

The resurrection of the dead is to St. Paul a fact which came home to him in the experience he had, when, on the road to Damascus, he saw the risen Christ. For it was part of St. Paul's lifelong conviction, on which, indeed, his whole career was built, that the glorified Jesus appeared to him that day *embodied*, and that the vesture in which he beheld Him was typical of the spiritual body in which all who are conformed to the spirit of Jesus shall appear with Him in glory. "Have not I *seen* Jesus Christ our Lord?" "He was *seen* of me also." On the immovable conviction which these words reveal, the whole career of the great apostle, as well as the entire structure of his theology, was based. And that there was nothing in his previous life which can be regarded as a psychological preparation for that experience, is coming more and more to be recognised. Whatever may be said as to the possibility of Saul of Tarsus being more than half convinced before his conversion that the Nazarenes were right, it must be strongly pressed that his life was

suddenly cleft in twain on the day of his conversion, and that the force which cleft it was an objective appearance of the risen Christ. We have already dismissed as unworthy of regard, the supposition that St. Paul's conviction of having seen Christ was due to an enthusiastic delusion. Even if the 'epileptic idea' were not 'cancelled' in the case of St. Paul, it is impossible to suppose that all the others who were with him at the moment were carried away with the same delusive impression, and still more difficult to imagine that whole Greek and Roman communities were willing to believe his story, and on the strength of it to organise themselves as Christians. St. Paul's manifest and unfailing candour, and the plain matter of fact style of the language in which he speaks of having seen the Lord, rule out all modern attempts to explain the appearance of the risen Christ to the apostle as a 'form of sensory automatism.' Professor James is not likely to have many followers, when he seeks to place the conversion of St. Paul, and the vision which accompanied it, under this category, and to bracket it with Constantine's cross in the sky.¹ It would take more credulity than is even

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 252.

put to the credit of St. Paul himself, to suppose that his beliefs, his career, and the subsequent development of the Christian Church, were due to what is termed a 'photism'! This is another of the many indications we have at the present moment that the statements of Scripture cannot be expressed, in spite of all such well-meant efforts as that of Professor James, in terms of modern science or philosophy. The risen Christ, with all the implications involved in that phrase, was to St. Paul a fact, which carried with it and became to him the assurance of personal immortality. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."¹ "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power."²

It will be necessary, therefore, for us to glance for a moment at the way in which St. Paul establishes the fact of the risen Christ, in whose appearance to him he so firmly believed. In 1 Cor. xv. he reminds his readers, first of all, that the resurrection of Christ had for them already passed beyond the region of debated points. It was embedded in that which for

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

² 1 Cor. vi. 14.

him and them had become 'the gospel.'¹ It was as impossible for them as it is for ourselves to conceive of Christianity without a risen Christ; and therefore St. Paul felt that it was only necessary to summarise, in passing, the testimony to that event of those who had actually seen Jesus after His resurrection. "He was seen of Cephas," he says, "then of the Twelve: after that He was seen of five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James; then of all the apostles: and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."² Of these alleged appearances, the only one which is not recorded in the gospels is that which was granted to James. It is referred to, however, as an early tradition in the "Gospel to the Hebrews." Of the others, the appearance to Peter, alluded to here, harmonises with the statement in the gospels, "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."³ That the risen Christ appeared to "all the apostles," is confirmed in the gospel narratives;⁴ and the manifestation to "above five hundred brethren

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 1-4.

³ Luke xxiv. 34.

² 1 Cor. xv. 5-9.

⁴ John xx. 19 *et seq.*

at once" may have been either a gathering of existing Christians, such as that referred to in the closing chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, or the assembly in Jerusalem in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The way in which the apostle refers to the appearance to himself, and his classification of it with the other manifestations, is most significant. It is as though he said: I also saw Him as distinctly as did Peter, and James, and all the other apostles. Such, then, is St. Paul's array of witnesses to this most wonderful fact of history. Compared with the list given in the four gospels, it is not complete, but for the apostle's purpose it is quite sufficient. When we consider the character and the competence of the witnesses cited; when we remember the unimpeachable character of James 'the Just' and the fickleness of Peter, who was afterwards turned into the rock foundation of the Church by the belief that he had seen the Lord; when we take into account, in a word, the historical career of all who are quoted by the apostle as having seen the Lord, we feel compelled to admit that, as witnesses to any *other* event, they would be regarded as unanswerable. There being no doubt, therefore,

in St. Paul's mind as to the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, the same evidence was sufficient to him to attest the resurrection of the dead. For we press the point that St. Paul was convinced that the risen and glorified Jesus had appeared to him clothed with the vestments of immortality. And that was to him the assurance of an eternal future for himself and all believers ; as it is expressed in one of his later words : " we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory." ¹ Or, again, in his epistle to the Romans : " if the Spirit of Him which raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." ² These words furnish us with a fitting opportunity for emphasising a point that must impress every reader of St. Paul's epistles in connection with this subject. " If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." From these and many similar phrases, it seems that St. Paul taught the assurance of resurrection unto everlasting life *only* to those

¹ Phil. iii. 21.

² Rom. viii. 11.

who were Christians. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of the question whether or not this makes for what is called 'conditional immortality.' Undoubtedly there is a strain in St. Paul's teaching which seems to point that way. It has been remarked, for example, by Dr. Marcus Dods,¹ that Scripture sheds no light on the future of the natural body; those who are in Christ enter into possession of a spiritual body, but there is no hint of any more perfect one being prepared for those who are not in Christ. No subject is so dark as the bodily future of the impure and the ungodly. No one, so far at least as the teachings of St. Paul are concerned, can promise himself a future body exempt from the pains which unrepented sin has introduced. His entire doctrine of the resurrection body applies to those who are in living union with Christ. The darkness, therefore, in which he leaves the eternal future of those who are not united to Him, and indeed his almost perfect silence on the subject of a general resurrection, might lead one to infer such a doctrine as that of 'conditional immortality,' which is that there is an eternal future only for those who are in

¹ *First Corinthians*, in Expositor's Bible, p. 380.

Christ. But it is perilous to draw positive inferences from a writer's silence. In this case it is specially so, for we must remember that St. Paul was writing to Christians, and was removing difficulties peculiar to them. His main interest, therefore, was in that aspect of the question which binds up the eternal future of the believer with Christ; and an almost exclusive attention to this point is not to be construed into an assertion of its apparent opposite. Nor is the apostle altogether silent regarding the general resurrection of the dead, though he is content to leave their eternal destiny shrouded in impenetrable mystery.

We cannot fully appreciate the way in which St. Paul binds up the fact of our immortality with the hope of assimilation to the glorified body of Christ, unless we look also at his inferential argument in this great resurrection chapter. It is only necessary to touch upon it very lightly. The line of this argument is the question, what are the consequences of denying the resurrection of the dead? So he asks, "what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?"¹ It seems to have been an early custom that a living

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 29.

person should, by receiving baptism, take the place of a departed friend. St. Paul does not set the seal of his approval on this custom, for he says, what shall *they* do who practise this habit; but the existence of the habit gives point to the question. For whether he approved of it or not, he makes those who practise it feel that it would be entirely robbed of its meaning if there were no resurrection of the dead. "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"¹ St. Paul, in other words, writes himself down a fool for all his sufferings as an apostle of the Master, if the dead rise not. In that issue the Epicurean would have the best of it.² And St. Paul forcibly indicates at this point the vital connection between a belief in the resurrection and the interests of morality. "Where no vision is, the people cast off restraints." The sentiment of that proverb is identical with the apostle's "be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." St. Paul had no belief in the superfine disinterested morality of certain modern writers. He saw that for the average man the Epicurean attitude is inevitable. "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink; for to-morrow

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 30-32.

² 1 Cor. xv. 32-34.

we die." If I am to die like an animal, I need not try to live like an angel. But there are still more serious consequences of the denial of the resurrection of the dead. Not to speak of the fact that in that case St. Paul and all who have been cited as witnesses to the resurrection are found false, because they bore witness that God raised Christ from the dead, whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not, it implied, in St. Paul's view, the dreary conclusion: "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."¹ But the most serious inference of all is that which St. Paul puts first, that the denial of the resurrection of the dead carries with it the denial of the resurrection of Christ. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen."² That was an issue that might well make the Corinthians pause and think, for the belief in a risen Saviour was part of their creed. And here St. Paul shows that this belief stands or falls with the other which the Corinthians had thrown aside. The longer we dwell upon his words, the more do we feel the weight of them. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." And if Christ be not risen,

¹ I Cor. xv. 18.

² I Cor. xv. 13.

what then? The whole fabric of Christianity crumbles to the dust. We do not wonder that, having run through this formidable list of the consequences of denying the resurrection, St. Paul should feel that the ground has been cleared for the triumphant assertion: "But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."¹ The resurrection of Christ, and, by inference, of all who have fallen asleep in Him, is what we mean when we say that St. Paul asserted the fact of immortality.

II.

The resurrection of the dead is to St. Paul a Christian doctrine. By this I do not mean to indicate merely the central place which he gives to the resurrection of Christ in relation to other doctrines. That is, no doubt, a fruitful field of investigation. The resurrection of Christ is to St. Paul the seal of His divine Sonship. It is the confirmation of the atonement—the point at which we are made to realise the inherent connection between the death of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 20 *et seq.*

Christ and the forgiveness of sins. We feel when we read St. Paul's epistles, a new sense of the importance of the phrase used by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, when he says that they preached 'Jesus *and* the Resurrection.' Our faith, as the apostle expresses it, is rooted in Him "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."¹

That is not, however, what we mean when we speak of St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection. To him the resurrection as a Christian doctrine is part of that larger doctrine of the new life which is so familiar to every reader of his epistles; and the doctrine of the new life is inseparably connected with his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for any reader of St. Paul's epistles to determine the precise shade of difference between his references to the Spirit of Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. But the broad fact is unmistakable, that it is through the Holy Spirit believers are united to Jesus Christ as the risen One, and are therefore, in the apostle's phrase, "planted in the likeness of His resurrection," made partakers of the life that He now lives, and

¹ Rom. iv. 25.

served heirs to that embodied immortality which is His.¹ We get to the very heart of St. Paul's doctrine on this subject, when we realise that the Holy Spirit, who came forth from the risen Christ, so unites us to Him that we become sharers in His death, and rise together with Him. That rising together is not merely an experience of present moral renewal in Christ, but in the thought of St. Paul it is specifically the beginning of immortality. Through the energy of the Holy Spirit the death and resurrection of Christ, in accordance with that law of solidarity which determines the relation between Christ and His people, are repeated in their experience. For to St. Paul the doctrines of resurrection, of final salvation, of eternal life, are all designations of the

¹ "The future quickening of the mortal body is the consequence of the present quickening of the living spirit. This is one of the chief notes in St. Paul's doctrine—this vital relation of the present gift of life to the future resurrection, the principle that the former is the pledge of the latter, and that the latter is implied in the former, the principle that the life which we now live is a life hid with Christ in God, a life for the whole man, which must triumph over everything opposed to life, whether in the spiritual being of man or in the physical nature through which that being acts." Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 553 ; fifth edition, pp. 440, 441.

same great hope from different standpoints. It is this which enables us to get to the foundation of his doctrine of the resurrection. It is part and parcel of his idea of the new life. The resurrection is the culmination of the development of the Christian man. St. Paul himself strenuously endeavours to attain unto the resurrection of the dead; and that attainment will be reached by Christians through the indwelling of the Spirit, who is transforming the new man into the image of Christ. By the 'new man' the apostle means the Christian redeemed in his entire manhood, 'body, soul, and spirit,' through the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and assimilating his spirit to that of Jesus. And for a man who is so 'changed into His image' there is being prepared a spiritual body. Now all this throws us back once more to St. Paul's primary meeting with Christ. "Since that day on the Damascus road he has become a new man. The sight he received of the risen Lord has kindled faith and conviction within him; not mere conviction of a truth which may be expressed in the words, Jesus of Nazareth is not dead, but alive; but devotion to the living Person whom he has seen and come to know

in His true character as Saviour : such devotion, that there grows up a communion between them, a fellowship of spirit with spirit : so true a union, that the apostle can only say that he possesses the spirit of Jesus Christ, that the actual life which he now lives as a human being, that life in its unity and entirety, depends not on him, or on anything that originates with him, but rests in the power and life of Christ,—depends on his faith in the Son of God, who had loved him and gave Himself for him.”¹

It is just here that St. Paul's doctrine appears to many to run into a kind of mysticism, yet the thought foundation of it is clear and distinct.² The day on which he met with the risen Christ, and on which his faith responded to that wondrous revelation, the soul of the apostle was brought into a marvellous new contact with a power outside himself. From

¹ *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, by H. A. A. Kennedy, D.Sc., p. 230.

² “The same mixture of logical elements and mystical which is discovered in his teaching on sin and grace, is also found in his doctrine of the end. It is this that gives their peculiar depth and magnificence to many of his statements, especially on the Resurrection. But it is this, too, that makes it peculiarly difficult to grasp all that his words imply.” Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 508 ; fifth edition, p. 404.

that moment he felt the spirit of the Lord Jesus dwelling within him, and becoming, within his heart, the 'hope of glory.' And for every believer in Christ Jesus that distinctive new life begins when, through the influence of the Spirit of God mediated through the exalted Christ, the believer becomes one with Him. "Life from the dead is in that Word, and immortality." That is what St. Paul means when he uses another of his great phrases: "Christ in you the hope of glory." Here he suggests that between Jesus and the soul whose life He is, a union is formed by the Holy Spirit so deep and deathless, that the believer becomes one with Him in life and immortality. And this practically is St. Paul's doctrine of the second Adam. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In Christ, I am made to realise what I am capable of becoming as a son of God. If you set Christ before me only as an example, you plunge me in despair; but if you show me that Christ, by His life and death, and, above all, by His resurrection, has become for me a source of new life, you inspire me with a vision of the glorious possibility of reaching that for which I was made. St. Paul's

conception of the relation of Christ to the believing soul is the key which opens the door of a future life. Christ's relation *to the believing soul*, we repeat,—for it is not enough merely to be reminded of His relationship *to the human race*. A racial union with Christ carries with it no spiritual consequences; but the union which joins a man to Christ by faith, enables St. Paul to speak of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ, that is, begets this hope in the soul which He inhabits. “Anything,” it has been said, “is more credible to a man who habitually has Christ abiding in him, than that such a trifle as death should have power to end such a union.” That is what we mean by the resurrection being to St. Paul a doctrine. It is bound up with his conception that the new life which the believer receives from the risen Christ is one that embraces the entire personality, so that he can pray as he does for the Thessalonians; “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

III.

In the teaching of St. Paul the resurrection is a power. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection," is the phrase which specially suggests this thought. What does the apostle mean by it? We are led to discover its genesis in his personal experience at the time of his conversion. It was as the risen Saviour that Saul of Tarsus saw Jesus Christ. This fact explains why the resurrection became to him so distinctively a 'power.' The other apostles had 'known Christ after the flesh.' They had followed Jesus of Nazareth along the entire course of His earthly life, through death to resurrection. They, too, had seen the risen Saviour; but that had not been their first sight of their Lord. It was different with the apostle of the Gentiles. What came *last* to them came *first* to him. The first impression he had of his Lord was as the risen One, glorified, and clothed, not in the body of His humiliation, but in the body of His glory. That stamped his religious experience for ever. That made the present life of Christ a living power within the man, a pulse which beat so

strongly that he could say: "Christ liveth in me." The other apostles reached the same result, so that to them also the death and resurrection of Christ became the foundation of what St. Peter called 'a living hope.' But the path was different. They ended where St. Paul began, and that is why in their writings the resurrection is so prominently a *hope*, while in his it is so distinctively a *power*. St. Paul's supposed indifference to the earthly life of Jesus has been very much overstated. It is possible to find in many a phrase used by the apostle a reference to that life on the story of which, as told to him by those who had companied with Jesus, he must often have pondered with loving devotion. He was certainly familiar with all they had to tell him of the appearances of the risen Saviour after His passion, and in this connection it must be remembered that St. Paul was writing about Christ before any of the evangelists had published His memoirs in their gospels. But the point is that the life of Jesus was a career on which the apostle *looked back*, reading its meaning, tracing its results, and, in the light of the resurrection, interpreting its significance for redemption. Thus the resurrection stood

first in his regard, because the vision of the risen Christ had been his first experience as a Christian. Living, therefore, in continual communion with the risen Saviour, he came to know Him in the power of His resurrection. Its power to transform and influence our life in this world is a distinctively Pauline thought, and distinguishes his way of looking at the subject from that of the other apostles.

There was therefore a fine harmony between the creed of the apostle and his life. He lived in the strength of that which he believed. His creed passed into his life, for the same vital principle was at the root of both. The resurrection of Christ was the foundation-stone of all those 'doctrines of grace,' the expression of which as they stand in our creed to-day we owe to him. It was also the spring of his daily life,—of the faith in which he laboured more abundantly than they all,—of the hope in which he suffered so patiently the loss of all things,—of the love with which he lived not unto himself, but unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us! The resurrection and the hope connected with it became to St. Paul a power enabling him to

rise to the height of his own ideal, that "like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."¹ That he was able to do so was due to his sense of the resurrection as a power to reinforce his moral and spiritual energy. And so this thought is akin to that of the Master when He sets Himself before His disciples under the bold and suggestive image of 'the Bread of Life.'

The most impressive feature of St. Paul's life is, that it seemed to be continually under the inward dominion of this power. He lived habitually in that atmosphere. And in this connection it has been said: "It may be felt that there is some danger lest the great words of Paul may carry us off our feet and divorce us from *terra firma* altogether. Some one may ask, but what does all this mean in practice? What sort of life is it to be? Apostles can soar, perhaps; but how about the man in the workshop or in the counting-house, or the woman busied in family cares? A life in 'the power of the resurrection' seems to be something that transcends earthly conditions

¹ Rom. vi. 4.

altogether.”¹ These questions are very pertinent, and afford an opportunity of pointing out that though the apostle has his soaring moments, he never allows himself to be swept off the ground of common life and duty. Again and again in his epistles we find him bringing what we might call his most mystical ideas into the closest relation with the simplest things of everyday life. Those who are told to set their affections on heavenly things, and to whom the assurance is given, “your life is hid with Christ in God,” are immediately warned of the dangers of bodily impurity. In such merely ethical counsels as, ‘let him that stole steal no more,’ ‘lie not one to another,’ we are made to feel that St. Paul wished to impress upon his readers the possibility of bringing their loftiest hopes to bear upon their lowliest duties, so that “this common morality begins to have an uncommon heart or spirit in it by reason of Christ.” To the apostle, who is as invariably practical as he is frequently transcendental, “the new life is to be an energetic life of the plainest goodness.”² Only it is to be a life into which a new driving force has come. The machinery of daily life and duty is to be kept

¹ Principal Rainy on *Philippians*, p. 242.

² *Ibid.* p. 243.

moving by 'the power of His resurrection.' This is by no means the devout imagination of a dreamy mystic, but a possibility that is open to all who have the spirit of Christ within them. Therefore in St. Paul's thought the belief of the resurrection is in the life of the Christian an emancipating influence. Like the blue sky, which can be seen from the level of a city street by the humblest toiler of the people, the power of the resurrection is a force which frees the soul that is possessed by it from the restrictions, tyrannies, and meannesses of time. When it has been our lot to dwell for a few weeks in some mountain hamlet, the pleasure of such a sojourn has been enhanced by the feeling that we belonged to the larger world beyond. We become interested, therefore, in the villagers, in the simplicity of their life and the occupations in which they are engaged; but we are also impressed by the limited character of their existence. And a feeling of something like compassion takes hold of us, for they cannot see beyond their own mountains. Are they not an emblem of the men and women whose interests are limited to this present life? Are there not many who are cramped within closer bonds

than those of the villagers in the remotest hamlet of the Alps? They have no sense of the freedom which comes of seeing the invisible, and living under the powers of the world to come. They live within the inevitable limits of to-day: the blue sky and the air of eternity are neither seen nor felt by them. They are objects of pity to those whom Christ has emancipated by opening up the vision of eternity. For it is that vision which can alone inspire the soul with a sense of its immortal destiny.

IV.

The resurrection is to St. Paul a promise. This branch of the subject springs from the same living root as all the others,—the faith which St. Paul had, and on which he lived from day to day, that the risen Jesus in His glorified humanity, body, soul, and spirit, was alive and supreme. There can be no reasonable doubt that the apostle arrived at his wonderful conception of the resurrection body as set forth in ‘the fifteenth of First Corinthians,’ by reflection on the amazing event which occupied the central place in his history, his

meeting with the risen Christ on the Damascus road. For he was firmly convinced that this was an appearance of the Lord in bodily presence, or perhaps we should say, in a spiritual organism. That organism was quite distinct from the bodily state in which He lived and laboured and died as the Son of Man on earth. It raised Him above the ordinary conditions and limitations of humanity. "In many ways His resurrection body differed widely from the body of His humiliation and passion. It was not ordinarily dependent on the same sustenance. It did not always travel to and fro by the same method of locomotion. It came and went, appeared and disappeared, in a way which baffled explanation. . . . Plainly He had done more than come to life again. He had entered a different sphere of existence."¹ There was on the part of all who saw Jesus alive after His passion, a preliminary hesitation in recognising Him. Mary mistook Him for the gardener; the disciples were affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit; the two friends journeyed with Him towards Emmaus, and their eyes were holden that they did not see Him. Yet they all

¹ Dr. J. Oswald Dykes, *Expositor*, iii. 161.

recognised Him eventually as 'this same Jesus'; and St. Paul was equally convinced that He had *seen* the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. The change which death and the grave had wrought did not destroy His identity.

That fact laid the foundation of St. Paul's doctrine of the spiritual body of the redeemed,—that it would be a new body, entirely distinct from the body of flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and yet that it would be a body in which the personal identity of its wearer would shine out distinctly. No doubt the experience on the road to Damascus also contributed 'certain pictorial elements' to St. Paul's conception of the glorified body of the redeemed. As the exalted Lord appeared to His apostle clothed in a body of 'glory,'—and we know what that phrase must have meant to one whose soul had been nourished by the Old Testament,—so the bodies of the saints would be similarly 'glorified,' and be free from all elements of decay, weakness, and corruption. He speaks elsewhere, striking the same high note, of 'the inheritance of the saints *in light*.' The memory of the great light that shone round about the glorified Jesus when He appeared to Saul, was what suggested

to him, in connection with the resurrection of the dead, "a condition of glowing brightness, the effulgence of the God of glory Himself." But that is of minor importance. The main point is St. Paul's conception of the resurrection body. What is involved in this? Chiefly, that the present material body shall have nothing to do with the future of the kingdom of God. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"; and these are the two main elements of our present organism. Much scepticism in past times on this subject might have been averted, if this obvious point had been as steadily attended to as it was consistently ignored. The resurrection of the body used to be thought of, and indeed believed, in connection with impossible suppositions as to the rising again of the very body which after death we reverently bury from our sight. The imagination of old writers, dwelling on such phrases as 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God,' used to picture the literal rending of gravestones, and the rising of the bodies of the saints to await the final judgment in the very churchyards in which they had been buried! Rabbinical writers, founding on such pictorial parables of resurrection as Ezekiel's

vision of the dry bones, were largely responsible for this. One Rabbi even indulged in the speculation that the reconstruction of the body in resurrection would take place in the reverse order from that in which it grew together at the first! Let it therefore be distinctly understood that the Christian doctrine of a resurrection body has nothing to do with any crude materialism of that sort. We know that in the course of an ordinary lifetime we may be said to have had many bodies; and "that after death again, the body that we bury in the grave, if left there to the natural process of decay, rapidly decomposes, sublimed into the air or incorporated into the soil—taking new forms, entering into new combinations, slowly or more rapidly: its entire substance finding its way once more into that ever moving, ever circulating tide which, carrying its constituent elements in such different directions, lodges portions, doubtless, in other living frames, which other human spirits in course of time inhabit."¹ Let us frankly acknowledge the full force of the phrase 'sown in corruption.'

But, having done so, we shall feel that we

¹ *The Resurrection of the Dead*, by William Hanna, D.D., p. 144.

are in a position to understand the imaginary questioner St. Paul had before him when he said: "but some one will say, How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" It has been supposed that this difficulty was not imaginary, but that it had actually been raised by the party of Apollos in Corinth, who, as he had been trained in the schools of Alexandria, would be familiar with the idea of a purely spiritual immortality. Be that as it may, the question was not merely a natural one to occur to a member of the Corinthian Church, but it is just *the* question we put to ourselves whenever the grave has closed over one whose very dust must be dear to us. "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" St. Paul's answer is most emphatic, and strangely scornful. Why he should at once pronounce the man who asks it a 'fool' is not at first apparent, unless it be that he wishes strongly to impress upon his readers that it is foolish to linger among the details of a subject when its broad outlines alone concern us. With that sharp 'thou foolish one' as an opening note, the apostle proceeds to show that the idea of the spirit being clothed again in the resurrection with an

organism is not incredible, because an equally incredible result accrues from the planting of the seed corn in the earth. This is an image the use of which St. Paul learned from Christ Himself when He said: "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." And the clothing of the redeemed soul with a spiritual body is, like the giving to each seed a body of its own, an exercise of the sovereign power of God. The reasoning of the foolish one is simply cut short by the final word, "God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him." The resurrection of the dead—the clothing of the spirit in an organism fit for the kingdom of God—the putting on of immortality by this corruptible,—all that is simply 'of God.' It is as if to say;—this body we now wear is not the only kind of body. Its very flesh is not the only kind of flesh. The flesh of men, and beasts, and birds, and fishes is different in every single case. The variety of the universe, terrestrial and celestial, is infinite. The chariots of God are twenty thousand. Lay the bodies of the saints to rest in hope, and trust Him to give them another body, another, as regards its constitution, but still a body, animated by

the same spirit that inhabited the body of flesh, so that its personality shall not be destroyed, but rather perfected; for it can adequately express itself, and come to itself, only in such a body of glory as God shall give them.

That also is plainly involved in St. Paul's conception of the body with which the redeemed shall rise in glory. "He has shown from the analogy of the sowing of seed, that the same life-principle can clothe itself in altered bodily semblance; nay more, that the very meaning of what seems to be death in the natural world may be only a transition to a fuller life, clad in a more perfect organism. The transformation does not mean loss of identity. For the 'body' is not restricted to a certain type."¹ There is, of course, a connection between the present and the future body, as is set forth in the well-known words of the Shorter Catechism: "and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in the grave till the resurrection." The connection, as in the case of our Lord Himself, is the persistent and identical spirit which animates both. While the body of the believer is to be changed from

¹ *Vide* Kennedy's exposition of 1 Cor. xv. in his '*St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, pp. 239-251.

a body of flesh to one of glory, the individual will not disappear. The personality of Jesus survived the shock of death, and His unchanged identity, alike in mental, moral, and bodily characteristics, was made manifest by many infallible proofs. His personality "survived unaltered the shock of death and the more mysterious transformation which we call His resurrection."¹ He, therefore, as the disciples saw Him during the forty days after His resurrection, and as St. Paul saw Him some few years later, is the supreme, outstanding assurance that each regenerated soul shall be eternally equipped with a bodily organism which is fit to inherit and inhabit the kingdom of God. For "so also is the resurrection of the dead." We cannot conceive of Christ as existing now without a body. That were to suppose His glorification to be incomplete. The 'half Christianities' which hold that Jesus is alive, but decline to pronounce as to His resurrection from the grave, show their halting here. They cannot explain the empty tomb. It was that which created the primitive faith of the Church ; and still, as ever, that faith is a shield with two

¹ Dr. J. Oswald Dykes in *Expositor*, iii. 161.

sides to it, an empty grave and a glorified body : "not here ; risen, even as He said !"

All this is plainly decisive as regards Christians. The Spirit who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead dwells in them. He, therefore, that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken their mortal bodies. But what of those who have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of His ?

That question ushers us into a zone of darkness, so far as Scripture is concerned. In St. Paul's teaching, "those who are in Christ enter into possession of a spiritual body ; but there is no hint of any more perfect body being prepared for those who are not in Christ."¹ It would seem to be the view of the apostle that we receive the spiritual body through the direct intervention of Christ. He broke the bond that united sin and death, giving victory over death, with all that is implied in that great phrase, to those who believe in Him. The eternal future, therefore, of the Christ-inhabited man is clear : the future of every other man is dark indeed. The eternal future is clear only in Christ. The thought of St. Paul on this subject centres in its interest for believers, and

¹ Dr. Marcus Dods on *First Corinthians*, p. 378.

the question of a *general* resurrection is secondary—obviously so, when we remember that he is addressing strictly Christian communities. What the resurrection shall mean to unbelievers, God only knows. Unquestionably St. Paul's scheme of thought leaves room for such a resurrection, and it is asserted in such words as these: "we must all be made manifest at the judgment-seat of Christ." But beyond that all is impenetrable, and we need not try to lift the veil for ourselves. We believe that "when the secret of the universe is told, it will be told worthily—grandly. If we are not suffered to peer through pin-pricks in the veil, it is because it will be rent in twain one day from top to bottom."¹

And so with the saying which is written in the prophecy of Isaiah, "He shall swallow up death in victory," the argument concludes. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end!" By 'the end' St. Paul here means the consummation of the Church and kingdom of God; the moment when, of His term of media-

¹ W. R. Nicoll, *The Key of the Grave*, p. 150.

torial administration, Christ shall be able to say, 'it is finished'; and as at the first so at the last, God shall be all in all. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This done, Christ shall gather in His own, and His work, so far as this world goes, shall be over. The hope of resurrection, therefore, is not merely an individual hope. Christ rose as a representative person. In His death and resurrection He represented the Church, the entire company of the redeemed, whom He loved and for whom He gave Himself. His victory over death is theirs; it is the end of the travail of His soul. Then shall He be satisfied. "Then cometh the end—which is the end of ends." Then shall the kingdom be established! Meanwhile this intermediate system of vicarious life, whose symbol is the cross, is still the theatre of the activities of Christ, and of those whom He has made priests to God. Christ's work as mediator is going on, and His redeemed are sharing it in glory. Christ is still using them. We know *that at least* regarding the departed. "When my father and mother died," writes one, "one of the first thoughts that saddened me was that I would no longer have the blessing of their daily

prayers for me. But perhaps I was wrong. Who knows that these prayers may not be continued in the very presence of God?" Yea; verily His servants shall serve Him there. They are about their old tasks. Their life is fruitful still, more fruitful, we may be sure, than ever. But they are not yet made perfect. It is impossible that they should be made perfect so long as it can only be said of them that their flesh rests in hope. But the hour cometh when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "Then cometh the end." And so we wait the time when Death shall be swallowed up in victory. And while we wait we are sure that our sainted dead are in the keeping of Christ. And we know absolutely nothing more. "We ask our unavailing questions about where they really are, what they are doing, how they are thinking, what they know of us,—and are confronted everywhere with the fact that we know nothing, and must simply take on trust what dim disclosures of their blessedness are given us, and wait till we too *see* what God hath prepared for them that love Him." But, thank God that, notwithstanding the reserve of revelation regarding

immortality, we know enough to keep us, in St. Paul's strong words, "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER V.
THE STING OF DEATH.

“Fear Death?”—BROWNING.

“What is there to fear? Nothing.”—CAIRD.

“Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark. The contemplation of death as the wages of sin and passage to another world, is holy and religious : but the fear of it, as a tribute due unto nature, is weak. It is worthy to observe how little alteration in good spirits the approaches of death make : for they appear to be the same men till the last instant. Certainly the Stoics bestowed too much cost upon death, and by their great preparations made it appear more fearful. It is as natural to die as to be born : and to a little infant perhaps the one is as painful as the other. A mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good, doth avert the dolours of death. But above all, believe it, the sweetest canticle is *Nunc dimittis*, when a man hath obtained worthy ends and expectations.”—BACON.

“O Death, where is thy victory?”—PAUL.

CHAPTER V.

THE STING OF DEATH.

AT the close of his argument for the resurrection of the body, St. Paul suggests very distinctly that we receive the spiritual body through the intervention of Christ. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first Adam became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."¹ The mode of Christ's intervention is more fully described in the words, "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."² Here the apostle puts himself in line with the trend of Scripture teaching regarding the relation

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 44-49.

² 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

between sin and death. For in a great variety of ways does Scripture impress upon us that an indissoluble bond—indissoluble save by the intervention of Him who linked them together—exists between sin and death. They are so related to one another in the Book of Genesis, in the old-world story of the way in which “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” St. Paul unites them in his epistle to the Romans, in which he says that “by the trespass of the one death reigned through the one.” And that “the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound.”¹ No stronger proof could be given of the mastery which sin has obtained in the universe. Because of the sin of the one and its consequences, sin hath reigned in death, so that men are the servants of a master who pays them unfailingly: “the wages of sin is death.”² And, once more, in the image of the ‘sting,’ the poisonous fang of a serpent, the apostle teaches that it was sin which brought death into the world. This does not mean that there was no death in the universe prior to the first sin. We are almost certain that there was; but man would have broken through the law of death which reigns

¹ Rom. v. 17, 20.

² Rom. vi. 23.

in the physical world, if he had not himself by reason of sin come under the dominion of death. Sin is the sting which death has for man, and "this poisonous fang was pressed in by the law." In both of these passages St. Paul ascribes the same function to the law. "The strength of sin is the law. The law came in beside, that the offence might abound. I had not known sin except through the law. I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."¹ "Did then that which is good become death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good; that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful."²

Thus we are brought face to face with the connection between death and sin, which must be broken before we can enter into possession of the hope of immortality, and which was dissolved by the intervention of our Lord Jesus Christ, who giveth us the victory.

¹ Rom. vii. 7, 9.

² Rom. vii. 13.

I.

This declared relation between sin and death is a fact which in a variety of ways we endeavour to resist.

Much of our difficulty regarding it is due to the feeling that sin and death belong to separate and in every way unrelated worlds,—sin being, to our thinking, a moral thing, and death a physical thing ; and we say to ourselves that a physical penalty for a moral offence is out of proportion. We try, therefore, to get over the difficulty by drawing subtle distinctions between what we call the natural and the spiritual worlds. We speak of death with an adjective, and we define the penalty of sin as *spiritual* death, while we regard the death of the body as a natural incident of the race.

Such distinctions are arbitrary and misleading. To the writers of Scripture, and to the biologist, there are not two unconnected worlds, and therefore two unconnected deaths. The physical and the spiritual worlds are ultimately one, as man's nature is also one ; and we have no right, whether of science or morals, to split up either the world or our own personality.

“Both in the Old Testament and in the New, man is regarded as a unity: and when it is said in the Old, ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,’ and in the New, ‘The wages of sin is death,’ death is used in its ordinary full sense: just as when it is said, ‘In the path of righteousness is life,’ and ‘Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life,’ life means, in the one case, this compound life which men live in the present body, and in the other case the new life which men shall live in the new body. Of course, death is a large word: it embraces not only dying, but remaining dead. . . . When, therefore, it is said that the penalty of sin is death, we must start from death as we know it. The dead are insensible to all that is. Fellowship with the living ceases. Fellowship with all ceases, even with God.”¹ Throughout the New Testament there is assumed the relation between sin and death as facts of one world. For St. Paul, death is one indivisible experience. It is treated, without any of our modern distinctions, as the consequence and the penalty of sin. “Death is the word which sums up the whole liability of man in relation to sin.”

¹ Davidson, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 517.

Man sinned. Man died. By one sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

It is, of course, quite valid to say that the penalty of sin is not exhausted in the dissolution of the body. Life and death in the Biblical sense imply more than the mere unity or dissolution of body and soul. They imply that further element which denotes moral relationship with God. To die is to become separate from God; to live is to be in union with God. Life in the Bible is "existence in touch with God."¹ Death is regarded as separation from God. "Death conceived as the final word on human destiny, becomes a synonym for future doom."² If, therefore, it helps us to speak of death as involving, through sin and its consequences, loss of communion with God, moral atrophy, the deterioration of the spiritual faculty, the wrath of God, or any other biological or theological expression, there is no harm in so expatiating on the desolation and havoc it involves. But it does not greatly clear up the subject, or carry us beyond the simple Biblical announcement, that sin and death are related as cause

¹ Davidson, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 519.

² Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions*, etc., pp. 117, 125.

and effect, as transgression and penalty ; that they hang together in such wise that "death is a kind of sacrament of sin." In Genesis and Romans, at all events, the world is one, man's nature is one : death is one indivisible experience.¹ "The sting of death is sin."

Nor does our repugnance to the fact that sin and death are so related, get any relief from speculations as to the possibility of death having reigned in the universe, even if sin had not entered it. There seems to be unquestionable evidence that death reigned in the world before man appeared upon the scene. We are told by those competent to speak, that death, so far from being an intruder into the world, has been here from the beginning, or almost from the beginning, of the appearance of life. It is a mere speculation that man was created immortal. It is more likely that he was not, but that had he remained unfallen he would have broken through that law of physical

¹ The Hebrew conception bears witness to the great truth of the ultimate unity of the physical and spiritual worlds, a unity which we regularly break up in our theoretical arguments, and as regularly presuppose in our working, personal experience. Theirs was a synthetic view both of life and of death. And no fact has to be more carefully borne in mind when we attempt to estimate the conceptions of St. Paul." Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions*, etc., pp. 110, 113.

death, under the dominion of which he brought himself by his sin. The discovery that this is the case does not, however, upset the teaching of Scripture, which is that the sting of death is sin. That is what makes death what it is to our experience, and gives it a character which otherwise it would not have. If death had had no sting imparted to it, it would have had a different nature, just as it becomes an entirely different thing to those in whose experience Christ has taken out the sting, and who go singing into the valley of its shadow. A change from one life, or from one mode of life to another, which might have been the normal experience of humanity, even if sin had not entered into the world, would have been painless and welcome. Death as the mode of such a change is painful and unwelcome, because it is penal. The penal character of death is essential to St. Paul's argument. Death is humiliating and fearful, because as a fact in the spiritual order it has taken on a secondary character, due to our condition as a fallen race. Even if there be, as we know there often are, circumstances attending death, in the case of those to whom Christ has given the victory over it, which make us feel that 'the curse is at

its minimum,' yet it is a curse. And in that curse, as the old-world story in Genesis tells us, nature is involved, and her thorns and thistles are the emblem of it. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans draws a vivid and pathetic picture of the way in which, from this curse which she shares with humanity, the whole creation, now groaning, cries to be redeemed. We live under an economy in which sin and death have a weird and inevitable relation to one another, so that we can speak of the one as the specific penalty and consequence of the other. Death comes from God to a being who is under law to Him. This is God's voice in death to a spiritual being: 'The wages of sin is death.' Death is the last enemy. 'The sting of death is sin.'

Nor can we get over this established relation between them by pointing out—either that many men and women live and die without recognising this relation between sin and death, or that there are others who have no fear of dying, who do not shrink from death, who are not all their lifetime subject to bondage by it. For, as to the former, the failure to recognise the relation between sin and death may be very far from creditable, and no proof

by any means of moral superiority. It may mean, and often does, that many persons live and die who tragically fail to realise what sin is, and who ignore death. Their lack of recognition is due to the possession of a pagan temper, which is most common, and is a feature of our age by no means to be commended. There are women to whom it is enough to think of the beautiful life of a departed husband as finished, and who tell you, if you try to suggest the hope of a future reunion, that they do not need it. That is pure paganism. Ignore death, and sin, which is its sting, and, of course, they will not trouble you. But there is a racial as well as an individual conscience, though in some unspeakable wickedness, in others inconceivable mental culture, may have almost quenched it; and the voice of that conscience, when it is allowed to speak, admits that the sting of death is sin. To the doomed man the horror is not to die, but to feel that he *deserves* to die. And that consciousness is so ineradicable, that the criminal who has pled a stout 'not guilty' before his earthly judges, dares not go before the Eternal till he has withdrawn it with his dying breath. One can deny anything by ignoring

it, but that does not alter facts. As Carlyle said when told that Margaret Fuller 'accepted the universe': "gad, she'd better." There is a universe which has facts and laws, and the one which will take no denial is that "sin hath reigned unto death." As for those who have no personal fear of death, that may be either a very grand or a very ignoble thing. We may be indifferent to death because we are morally indifferent to everything. Or we may have got the victory, not only over death, but even over the fear of dying, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Neither of these issues alters the fact which created the necessity for mediation, and is the situation in which Christ found Himself when He entered into saving relations with men, that by one sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for all sinned. The sting of death is sin. "Death was the specially threatened penalty to the sole race, which was, on the one hand, created with an animal organism, which could die; and, on the other, made in the image of God."¹ When Christ came to give Himself for our sins, He did it by dying.

¹ *The Epistle to the Romans*, by H. C. G. Moule (Cambridge Bible), p. 105.

II.

We are now in a position to ask and answer the question, How is the sting of death removed? How is the bond between sin and death broken?

It is removed by the death of Christ. "First of all, Christ died for our sins. When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He met and dealt with the situation in which sin and death are linked together as transgression and penalty, as work and wages, as seed and fruit, as cause and effect. However the natural man refuses to accept that relation, it exists, and conscience does justice to it. Death is the fact in which the Divine judgment on sin comes home to the conscience. And Christ, who has been boldly called 'the conscience of humanity,' did homage to that judgment. He died, and by dying He magnified the law that linked sin to death, and made it honourable. In the name of humanity, as the head of the race, its representative and root, or in St. Paul's language, the second Adam, He said Amen on the Cross to the Divine judgment on sin. That is about as far as we can go in the way of explaining the

great fact of the atonement. St. Paul sums it up in the short, simple confession of faith of the early church : *Christ died for our sins*. It does not matter greatly what metaphors we employ to set forth and make clear that truth. Those which men have employed are, for the most part, non-scriptural. We may, with some, say : death was not His, but ours. Therefore, in making it His, He died for us as our substitute. Or we may say, with Erskine in the *Brazen Serpent* : "this is the great thing which Christ has accomplished by suffering for us—He has become a Head of new and uncondemned life to every man, in the light of which we may see God's love in the law and the punishment, and may thus suffer to the glory of God, and draw out of that suffering the blessing which is contained in it." Or, with Macleod Campbell, and later with Moberly, that Christ as the new head of humanity became a representative penitent, confessed our sin in dying, and said Amen to the law and justice which His sacrifice satisfied. These are metaphors, and stand for *theories* of atonement which are more or less satisfying and sufficient. They are all endeavours to set forth that aspect of the death of

Christ under which we see that it was not the death of an *individual*, but the death of Christ *and others*—the act of a race or community—entitling one and another for whom it availed to say: “I am crucified with Christ.” They are but broken lights of Him who, as the Light of the world, revealed the eternal law which had to be respected: “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Each and all of them leave the mystery of the atonement where they found it. For, as an evangelical interpreter of the epistle to the Romans says, “this doctrine approaches as near as can be to complete mystery, and leans upon relations between the Head of an intelligent Race, and that Race, which are probably knowable by the Eternal alone.”¹

The thing to be grasped is that, in dying, Christ broke up, and severed for ever, the bond between sin and death, so that to those who believe in Him and realise that they are one with Him, sin is no longer the sting of death. It has been extracted by the death of the sinless One. Christ has transformed death to the believer in Him: it is no longer penal and humiliating. We may not be able to hail death and bid it welcome, but its cha-

¹ Moule on Romans, *Cambridge Bible*, p. 262.

racter is no longer that of judgment. We can now see God's love in it, and extract blessing even from the suffering which, in most cases, leads up to it. It is a stingless thing.

The prophet whose words St. Paul quotes and paraphrases in the hymn of victory with which his resurrection chapter closes, and who saw further into the heart of the gospel than any of the Hebrew prophets, almost grasped this secret of a victorious death. "O Death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!"

We are familiar with the strain of Christian hymns of death, whose burden is that "it is not death to die." They all proceed on the assumption that through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ the sting of death, which is sin, has been extracted, removed, withdrawn :

"Death has no sting, for the Saviour has died."

"Jesus lives ! no longer now
Can thy terrors, death, appal us."

"Death of death ! and hell's destruction."

Their variety is endless, but they are varieties of one theme only, and none of them is so grand, so simply victorious, so scripturally convincing as the apostle's :

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

CHAPTER VI.
ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
RESURRECTION.

“Something wonderful and recreative in its power took place upon that Easter morning, the enduring results of which are Christian homes and morals, Christian society and culture, Christian laws and liberties.

“Something happened over eighteen centuries ago in Judea on the morning of the third day, which has changed the whole current and flow of history ;—men’s lives, their homes, the rights of children, the lot of slaves, the position of women, the whole order of society ; all things human are taken into, and swept along by, a new, resisting movement, which still bears, upon the crest of its advancing wave, the hope of the world’s future.”—NEWMAN SMYTH.

“The day in which the belief in an after-life shall vanish from the earth will witness a terrific moral and spiritual decadence. There is no lever capable of raising an entire people if once they have lost their faith in the immortality of the soul.”—M. RENAN.

CHAPTER VI.

ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RESURRECTION.

THE discussion of the subject of resurrection must needs close with a consideration of its ethical import. Our interest in the question of a future life is quite as much ethical as doctrinal. We are equally concerned to establish the truth of this belief and live under the power of it. "The moral significance of such a doctrine as the resurrection of the body cannot be overstated. Both personally and socially, it places the sanctions if not the foundations of morality on a new ground."¹ This was certainly the view of St. Paul. To him, as to all the apostles, the Christian religion was not a theory, but a practice of righteousness. Therefore it is that in closing his great chapter on the resurrection; having followed his argument step by step to

¹ Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 158.

its goal ; having woven a chain of proof for the doctrine the links of which no sophistry of Corinthian speculation could break, he settles down to the practical appeal with which it ends : “wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”¹

I.

On the personal side the belief in the Christian doctrine of immortality becomes a stimulus to moral purity, and an incentive to Christian service. When we remember, as St. Paul says, that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body,—that our bodies are members of Christ—that God both raised the Lord and will raise up us through His power,—we realise that “each sin against the body is no longer a stain on that which is itself doomed to perish, but a defilement of that which is consecrated to an eternal life. To injure another, is to injure one with whom we are bound by the closest ties through a common fellowship in Christ.”²

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

² Westcott, *op. cit.* p. 159.

It is in the light of the hope that this mortal shall put on immortality, that there dawns upon us the moral significance of the words of St. Paul: "the body is for the Lord." We cannot fulfil the end of our being, which is to glorify God, until we learn to glorify Him in our bodies. By the spirit of prophecy in the Fortieth Psalm the Son of God said, 'a body hast Thou prepared for me.' We must not forget that He became man by taking to Himself 'a true body.' "It was through the body of the Lord that the great facts of our redemption were accomplished. It was the instrument of the incarnation and of the manifestation of God among men, of the death and the resurrection by which we are saved."¹ Therefore we remember, too, that 'the Lord is for the body.' It has a great future as well as the soul. Our hope for eternity will not be fulfilled until the body is redeemed along with the soul and spirit, and we in our complete personality are conformed to the image of the risen and glorified Redeemer. The power that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, the identity of which shall be preserved, whatever may become of

¹ Dr. Marcus Dods on *First Corinthians*, p. 153.

their component parts, through all the coming changes. We cannot understand how this shall be, but in presence of the resurrection of Christ we believe it, and the faith of it keeps us from thinking of death as the end of all that is physical. "The Lord is for the body, because in the Lord the body has a future opened up to it. The only future of the body we dare to look at without a shudder is the future it has in the Lord."¹ This is enough to make us start at the very thought of a sin which would involve rupture with Christ. The sin in connection with which St. Paul writes these solemn words is the only sin which, by its very nature, alienates the body from Christ, its proper partner. Having been bought, therefore, with a price, and having had written upon our very bodies the signature of immortality, what a stimulus we have to keep ourselves pure, to glorify God in our bodies, to remember that "blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God !"

The hope of immortality supplies the believer with an incentive to Christian service, or, in St. Paul's words, "to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the

¹ Dr. Marcus Dods, *op. cit.* p. 154.

Lord." For by 'the work of the Lord' we suppose the apostle to mean, not something added to and different from our daily life, but just that life itself, with its conflicts and hopes and duties, as we have to live it from day to day. We speak of the Christian life and of Christian service as if they were something added to the work which has been given every man to do. It is not so. The work of the Lord is the continual, daily, hourly effort to do the will of God. For Jesus and all His followers it is a lifelong work. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and so do they. The lesson is short, the learning long. But St. Paul's 'wherefore' suggests that motive which can alone suffice to keep one 'steadfast and unmovable,' in a life-work which, having eternal issues that affect the entire personality, demands a motive such as the resurrection hope can alone supply. It goes without saying that for every sort of work a motive is desirable to keep the worker 'steadfast and unmovable.' A slender motive will often be sufficient, such as the love of pleasure or wealth. A noble motive is a more powerful incentive, as when Jacob served seven years for the love he bore to Rachel. But we name

the highest of all motives when we speak of the constraining love of Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Risen with Christ! We can find in that thought the stimulus to a service from which weariness may disappear, and in which drudgery may become divine. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." And this is the only work of which that can be said. There is another motive for steadfastness in Christian service, and our Lord has urged it also. "The night cometh when no man can work." No doubt that must ever be a strong incentive to moral strenuousness. It is fitted to make us work earnestly and solemnly—oh, how solemnly, when we see the lengthening shadows! But we want a motive that shall inspire us with joy, the sense of freedom and victory in Christian service. For that, it is not enough to know that 'the night cometh.' We need also to be assured that 'the night is far spent and the day at hand.' That will nerve us to 'put off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.' So St. Paul says 'wherefore'! And we feel that he is right. Men have not, for the most part, given the resurrection its true place in relation to

Christian living. Do we ever feel in ourselves a sense of moral uplifting in 'the daily round, the common task,' through the thought that we are children of the resurrection? Do we realise the vital union between these two things which the apostle joins together: "set your affections on things above—, where Christ sitteth?" Do we know what it is to feel our hearts leap up within us at the thought that we carry the deepest of all secrets, and that one day it shall be told to an assembled world: "your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also be manifest with Him in glory"? If we kept this ever before us, we should know what it is to be steadfast and unmovable! Unmovable *because* steadfast! Like some crag standing out in the sea on which the waves of ages have beaten in vain; they have scarred its face, it has in part been worn away; but there it stands inflexible to the last. Or like some king of the forest, an old tree whose stem and branches have withstood the winds of ages, which, though they have bent its branches, have been powerless to disturb its roots. Steadfast, unmovable in faith and obedience and trust and love, because we have been rooted and built

up 'in Christ.' The hope of the resurrection is the secret of steadfast progress, if such a daring paradox will stand. "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." His work was not in vain. It was not buried with Him. He rose, and He and His work went up together to that world where 'work never can bring weariness, for work itself is love.' "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, for their works do follow *with* them." They and their works shall be raised together with Christ at last!

II.

It is no less true that socially as well as personally the hope of the resurrection has an ethical import of a far-reaching kind. It is the true safeguard of national morality. One of the most suggestive aphorisms of the wise man is the proverb: "Where no vision is, the people cast off restraints."¹ In the case of Israel this is historically incontestable. So long as they remained true to the spiritual ideals of their prophets, they lived. When these were ignored or forgotten, they perished.

¹ Prov. xxix. 18.

And the history of other nations is a sufficient illustration of the principle that, in proportion as a people loses its faith in revelation, it falls into decay. This is specifically true with regard to the belief in God and immortality. Where no vision of this is, the people perish. And in Britain, as in Israel, the belief of immortality is of the nature of vision. It is grasped not by the scientist, but by the seer. The seers in Israel got the vision of it late in her history, when the sense of the worth of the *individual* as contrasted with the *nation* began to dawn. We find it in Habakkuk, in the victorious question, "Art Thou not from everlasting, mine Holy One? We shall not die." We have it in those late psalms which contain such explicit testimony to immortality. Men who in a great evangelical succession had known what it is to have fellowship with God, could not believe that it was possible for death to interrupt or close it. They were assured of the immortality through the communion. They found in the present fact of communion with God the spring and promise of the life everlasting. In Christ, the furthest seer, the greatest prophet, "yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet," it was finally brought

to light. Immortality is essentially a truth of religion, and of the Christian religion. In the Old Testament it is bound up with union to God; in the New it is identified with "life in a risen Saviour." It is the sure safeguard for the wellbeing of a nation. We see what becomes of the denial of it in France, in the casting off of those restraints which are rooted in the faith of the unseen. Let it go in any generation, and the immediate result must be the loosening of the bond between faith and morals, and the coarsening of religious and national ideals. We are threatened in our own land with the submergence of this faith in a flowing tide of materialism. It is a period in which imperialism in politics, animalism in food and drink, and absorption in pleasure, are features of our national life that are full of menace. It is a time in which extremes meet, in the avoidance alike, by the cultivated classes and the submerged tenth, of acts of worship which were once observed. It is a time of little 'vision,' in which we have to think before we can name a prophet or a poet where once there were many. Yet the strongest tide must turn. We have lived to see the wave of scientific materialism rolled back, and that of materialism

in life is bound to ebb as well. "All the great ages have been ages of belief." And a great age of belief will come again, when heroes will return, and poets be made, and men's thoughts be fixed once more upon eternal verities. God never leaves Himself without a witness. However portentous the signs of the *times* may be, we have always the signs of *eternity* within ourselves. "God hath set eternity in our hearts." The faith in God and eternal life shall be revived because we possess a nature that liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of communion with God. However far off it seems, and apparently unreal,—for spiritual facts cannot be weighed or counted,—if we would only let the film of a carnal mind fall from our eyes, and yield to the leading of God's Spirit, to us also would Jesus say: "there be some here who shall not taste of death till they *see* the kingdom of God." For it is a kingdom to be seen. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it. God and immortality are the vision of the seers. "The vision shall come though it tarry." And with it that morality which is the wellbeing of a people shall be founded on new pillars and enforced by new sanctions. "Righteousness exalteth a nation."

But the only secret of such an exalting force is the conviction that Christ rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

The ethical import of resurrection, in its Christian form and in its social aspect, may be realised in another way. The standing problem both in ancient and modern times is the reconciliation of the individual and society. It found no solution in pre-Christian times at all. The ideal state of Plato was one in which the individual was merged as having no independent moral value. In Israel the nation was also an entity in which the individual was content to lose himself. The recognition of the man as an individual is a distinctly Christian idea, though prophets who came late in Israel, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel and certain of the Stoics in Greece, were conscious that it pressed for acknowledgment. Christ was the first teacher who discovered for the individual his value as a son of God and his immortal destiny. In Christianity the claims of the social organism were fully recognised for the first time in such great conceptions as those of the kingdom of God, the church, the body of Christ. Nor is there any contradiction in the New Testament between the personal and

social ideals. "The Stoic stood apart in proud loneliness, and looked upon the turmoil of statesmanship and war with the stern indifference of despair or resignation."¹ But the Christian is conscious of no conflict between his own interests and those of the organised society of his fellow Christians. It is in the church, indeed, that he fully attains the realisation of himself. The higher unity in which this immemorial dualism between the individual and the State is resolved, is that organism for which Christian thinking has coined so many names, 'the kingdom of God,' 'a spiritual house,' 'the temple of the living God,' 'God's building,' 'the holy city.' The great principle of the headship of Christ over the Church which is His body, implies the individual action and mutual dependence of His several members. How then, we may ask, and at what point,—by means of what doctrine or principle,—is the reconciliation of the conflicting claims of the individual and society effected? We answer, in one word, the resurrection. That truth is the means of uniting the individual and society as it is the means of uniting the soul and the body. Is

¹ Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 161.

the social organism regarded as a kingdom? The King claims the allegiance and service of every subject, because He was declared enthroned by His resurrection from the dead. Is it regarded as a spiritual house? The risen Lord is the Son over God's house, whose house are we. Is it the temple of the living God? The Shekinah is the risen and indwelling Christ, according to His promise, 'Lo, I am with you always.' Is it God's building? Again the Christ of resurrection and glory is the chief corner-stone. Is it the holy city, new Jerusalem? 'The Lamb is the light thereof.' Under all the New Testament imagery of that Christian society which Jesus termed 'My Church,' the resurrection is the point at which all differences between the individual and society cease. As it is the bridge by which the passage to the unseen is effected, so is it the great principle of reconciliation. From the viewpoint of the resurrection the individual believer looks out and feels himself the subject of the King of saints—a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God—one whose citizenship is in heaven. All discords are resolved for him in the higher harmonies of the music

of heaven. Through the faith of resurrection in and with Christ, he has come to himself as well as to the kingdom. The resurrection is, in a word, the great unifying principle. This fact comes out especially in connection with the ideal of the headship of the living Christ over the Church which is His body. Through it He lives. At the point of the belief in a risen Saviour, individual Christians are united together in virtue of their relation to Him. That relation is formed by the Holy Spirit, who fills the temple with the Divine Presence, and knits together the stones which compose God's building, and welds into a unity of common fellowship and interest the members of the Body of Christ. This is what makes the Church a living organism, not only capable of growth from age to age, but incapable of anything else than progress. One Spirit hallows all, and that Spirit is a gift consequent upon the resurrection.

It is an easy and inevitable transition of thought from this to the conception of the resurrection, as carrying with it a principle of the reconciliation and restitution of all things in Christ. The union of the individual and society in the Church of the risen Lord is

but a step towards a wider harmony and a vaster change, that change which in St. Peter's great phrase we speak of as 'the restitution of all things.'¹ The issues raised by such an outlook have a reach that exceeds our feeble grasp; yet there are moments when we do catch in our hearts a sense of the fire that burns in St. Paul's great poem of a new heaven and a new earth. What is involved in the restitution of all things we cannot fully know, but the resurrection of creation is bound up with the resurrection of the body of man in Christ. "The ennobling of our material organisation contains, as it were, the promise of a more complete transfiguration of Nature. It is possible that the change lies nearer to us

¹ "St. Paul's doctrine reaches out into larger and further issues still. It looks to the ransom of creation, and to the transformation of the world. When the adoption for which man waits is completed by the resurrection of the body, creation itself shall be partner with him in its glory. This is the burden of the loftiest and profoundest of all those passages in the Pauline writings which give us visions of the far-reaching purpose of God with regard to objects other than man. . . . The fire that burns in the paragraph comes from the great thought that creation is linked with man, involved in the consequences of his failure, but sharer with him in the glory that is to be revealed. This is St. Paul's 'evangel of the creation.'" Salmond, *Christian Doctrine*, etc., pp. 556-59; fifth edition, pp. 443-44.

than we were apt to imagine. It may, perhaps, be the case that what appear to us to be imperfections and evils in the physical or animal world, may derive the character which we attribute to them from the incompleteness of our own faculties : and that this transfiguration (relative to us) may lie within us and not without. . . . To the Christian the laws of Nature are not laws only, but prophecies. In the light of the Resurrection they are symbols of something broader and more glorious beyond them. They do not confine hope, but guide it.”¹

The Christian hope of resurrection is a promise of the infinite spiritual progress of our race. It sets a stamp upon man as a being of infinite possibilities. “We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.” In that thought, as Westcott has said, Robert Browning found “the basis of a firm belief in the continuity of personal life through death.” There is time for man. Works of Grecian art may look out upon us with a relative perfection stamped upon them. But man, with his yearnings and failures and struggles and hopes : man, who is exalted not by what he

¹ Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, pp. 161-63.

does, but by what he would do : man fronts us with the mark of a splendid incompleteness upon him, which is itself the promise of a life where hope shall be fulfilled, and the unfinished structure be fitted with a copestone.

Immortality is the seal of the grandeur of humanity. "Paganism proclaims the grandeur of man ; Judaism, the supremacy of God. Christianity accepts the antithesis, and vindicates by the message of the resurrection the grandeur of man in and through God."

THE FUTURE LIFE.



CHAPTER VII.

A VICTORY OF FAITH.

“The human spirit is the greatest thing in the world ; but that which is greatest in the human spirit, or that which makes it great, is faith.”
—DAVIDSON.

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

“We pace the deck together,
Faith and I ;
In stress of midnight weather,
Faith and I ;
And catch at times a vision
Of the bright Eastern sky,
Where waiteth God to tell us
That we shall never die.”

“In the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
All things, responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality.”

WORDSWORTH.

“I feel within me the Infinite.”—NAPOLEON.

CHAPTER VII.

A VICTORY OF FAITH.

FROM whatever point of view we look at it, the conviction of immortality is a victory of faith. Though the testimonies of science, of philosophy, and poetry are corroborative of the hope of a future life, in the last issue we simply take the assurance of it on trust. And there is certainly no belief which makes such a heavy demand upon our faith, or which, when once we have attained it, so compels the conviction that "blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." The disclosures made by Scripture are so scanty, that when we have studied the Biblical evidence as fully as it is possible to do, and have listened even to the last word of Jesus and St. Paul, the reserve of revelation throws us back on the simple faith that there *is* a life to come. This is the case not merely in regard to those questions relating to the future which

spring from our reasonable curiosity, but we feel it even with regard to the conviction of the life everlasting in its simplest and most elementary form. The bare belief in immortality is reached, not by a process of philosophical reasoning, nor as the result of scientific demonstration, but by a great leap of faith. The truth is that we must live in an atmosphere of Christian ideas before we can be assured of immortality. It belongs as a kind of Christian birthright to those who have been nurtured in the faith of the Fatherhood of God, and to whom from their earliest years there has come the assurance of the Elder Brother who shows us the way to our Father's house. For most of us, the belief in the life to come is simply part of ourselves. It belongs to that great world of faith in which one must grow accustomed to live before one can be assured of all its wealth and glory. Therefore a study of the subject of the life everlasting leads to the conclusion that this great conviction is a victory of faith, a triumph of love, and a conquest of hope.

I.

Looking at it as a victory of faith, we are reminded, in the first place, that it is through faith we learn to believe in an unseen universe. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We cannot conquer the dominant materialism of this life without a great effort of faith. It was the moral force which faith became in the lives of the old saints that put them in possession of what was never more to them than an illusive promise. This is the meaning of the great eulogy of the faith of the men of the past, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. There we see that God's promises, though they are never *delusive*, are intentionally *illusive*. Hence it is said, "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having greeted them from afar."

In G. F. Watts' allegorical figure, "Faith is presented dressed in a long flowing robe, girded resolutely at the loins for work, with massive sleeves folded back from her hands, and a face looking steadfastly up to heaven. She sits on the bank of the clear stream of truth, and laves her blood-stained feet in the crystal waters. Watts

does not represent Faith as a warrior, but she has still the sheathed sword in her hand ; and in the picture we see her loosening it, and putting it aside, implying along with her blood-stained feet the victory out of which she has come triumphantly. . . . This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. It is not the root-idea of the figure that the life of faith is all conflict. The beginning of the vital processes of true faith must indeed ever be by the sword, but its death pains become birth pains through which a happier future is born. . . . The whole spirit of Watts' picture breathes the tolerant Christian spirit of a man who knows in his own experience what true faith is. . . . Watts has embodied in his picture the ideal which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews has presented in his gallery of hero saints, which shows that faith was most conspicuous in the history of the past, as it would be the most conspicuous virtue in the history of the future—which united all the ages and all the dispensations." ¹

With us, therefore, as with these ancient heroes, it is only when faith becomes a moral power, assuring us of the unseen universe, that

¹ *Life Work of G. F. Watts*, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D., p. 206.

the soil is provided out of which the hope of immortality can grow. It is a long step towards the attainment of that hope when men in this world come to believe that there is something more than they can see and touch. We are not allowed in these days to forget the existence of what is called 'the man in the street,' and the expression serves the purpose of bringing before us those whose horizon is exclusively that of the present life. It is unquestionably true that the street, the workshop, the exchange, bound the vision of a vast number of men and women. This is the real difficulty in the way of awakening the hope of immortality. Their circumstances from day to day are not such as to create the yearning for it. And yet we may be sure that there are few people who have not in them immortal longings,¹ which a change of fortune, or the touch of God's finger in sickness, or the experience of bereavement, can awaken in a moment. The surest way, therefore, of leading men to believe in the life everlasting, is to endeavour to create around them an atmosphere, or environment of faith in the unseen and eternal.

¹ "Else why this pleasing hope, this fond desire, this longing after immortality?"

Where that exists, the leap into the assurance of a personal immortality for all who are in fellowship with God is inevitable.

II.

In another way the belief of the life to come, as a Christian conviction, is essentially a triumph of faith. We believe it on the witness of those who saw the risen Christ. Their word for it is really all we have to go upon. In this aspect, therefore, faith is very conspicuously a moral force. It may perhaps seem rather as if it were an intellectual thing; for the sifting of evidence, and the weighing of testimony for or against a particular event, may appear to be a purely mental exercise. A moment's reflection will, however, make it apparent that it is impossible to judge of the testimony of apostles to the resurrection of their Lord, and the appearance which He presented after He had risen from the dead, without the indefinable gift which we call moral insight; and it is a far surer guide to the attainment of truth than the keenest intellectual acumen. In order to be assured of the fact that a risen and glorified Christ is at this moment alive and supreme, we

have to range ourselves beside such witnesses as St. Peter, St. Paul, and the army of believers whom the appearance of the risen Jesus almost instantly transformed from despair to enthusiasm. To put a right estimate upon the testimony of the witnesses to immortality, implies that spiritual discernment which is of the very essence of faith.¹ But when we are satisfied that they are reliable, and that their testimony agrees, we have in the last issue to take their word for it that Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

III.

The victory of faith in grasping the conviction of the life everlasting is the more unmistakable, because it has to cling to that belief, and

¹ "In this connection we may observe how incredible it is from the nature of the testimony alleged that the Apostles could have been deceived. . . . One person might be so led away by enthusiasm as to give an imaginary shape to his hopes, but it is impossible to understand how a number of men could be simultaneously affected in the same manner. . . . Every avenue of delusion seems to be closed up. For forty days Christ was with the disciples talking with them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. If we cannot believe that the Apostles deceived others, it seems (if possible) still more unlikely that they were the victims of deception." Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*, pp. 100, 101.

persist in it, in face of a great deal of inevitable agnosticism. After all, the net result of such an inquiry as the present is really to show us how little we know. Beyond the fact that Christ appeared alive after His passion, in bodily form, and that His personal identity was unimpaired by the experience through which He had passed ; and that we infer from this, with St. Paul, that believers in Him shall have a similar experience, our attitude towards the future life and its problems must be one of reverent agnosticism. That attitude is essentially a scriptural one : "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is not necessary again to refer to our hearts' questionings regarding the nature and the sphere of our future life. We have already seen that they are covered by the negative assurance of the Master, "if it were not so, I would have told you." With regard to all the questions that knock at the door of our hearts, and that are suggested by the imperishable affections which God has implanted within us, we feel that we can believe even where we

have not seen. But we have to believe just because we have not seen, and never shall see, until for us, too, the veil is lifted, which for so many of those whom we knew and loved on earth has long since been rent in twain. It is impossible for us to attach too much importance to this, that the reserve of revelation regarding all questions subordinate to the main fact of personal immortality puts a very great strain on our faith. There is absolutely nothing in regard to which we have to take so much on trust. What we shall be, and where we shall be; what may be the relation of our future home to this world in which we are living; whether, as some have supposed, the scene of our future life may be this world itself, redeemed and purified from sin; whether, when we pass away from this life, we shall be in touch with those we have left behind us; whether those who have passed from our sight and are now in the presence of Christ are praying for us, because they know the case in which we are,—these are all questions that have been only partially answered in the word of God. That they are in great measure hidden, is evident from the fact that there is so much questioning among us with regard to them.

And, on the whole, we feel that God has kept all these things from us in wisdom and love, just that He may put a strain upon our faith at that point where it is His will that we should rest upon the simple words of promise on which He has caused us to hope. The hiddenness of our future life, and the darkness that overhangs its destiny, are good for us ; for the faith that is severely strained will also be most surely strengthened.

“Till death the weary spirit free
My God hath said—’Tis good for thee
To walk by faith and not by sight ;
Take it on trust a little while,
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
In the full sunshine of His smile.”

IV.

But the full significance of the hope of immortality as a victory of faith can only be grasped by the thought of those things over which it is victorious. For it is through the belief in the life everlasting that faith triumphs over the sufferings and the separations of this present time ; its sufferings, of which St. Paul says that they pale in comparison with the glory which is to follow ; and its separations,

because for all of us, and most of all for the believer, life is here distinguished by incessant separations. Nowhere is the triumph of the faith in immortality so grandly conceived as when, in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the apostle dwells at once upon life's sufferings and separations, and shows by that series of questions with which it closes, and in which he reduces doubt to absurdity, how complete is the Christian's victory over both. No man alive at that time knew so much of present suffering, or had such a clear conception of the compensating glory that is to follow, as St. Paul. There is nowhere in literature any more perfect song set in a minor key regarding the sorrows of the present, than 'the eighth of Romans,' and perhaps its finest feature is the way in which the apostle depicts nature as crying out in sympathy with man for redemption from those things which make her groan. There is a figure as perfect as that of a Greek statue in St. Paul's picture of mother nature, standing like the figure of a sailor's wife beside the silent sea, and looking across its waters to the horizon on which she sees the star of hope beginning to rise. What is she looking for? What is she straining her

eyes to see? That weird and anxious one, whose very countenance is scarred with lines of suffering? She is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. Far out on the horizon of her hope she sees the eternal day-star beginning to appear. "It is coming," we hear her say, in the apostle's throbbing verse; "it is coming, that hour for which the sons of God have waited long." We cannot resist the pathos and the beauty of that whole passage, in which St. Paul shows that the redemption of Christ shall rest on nature as well as upon man. The thorns and the thistles shall be uprooted from the garden of Eden after all. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." This conviction that the redemption, alike of nature and of man, shall be complete, rests upon St. Paul's assertion that God hath subjected both nature and man in hope of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Nothing in literature rings with such a note of victory as the closing

paragraph of that chapter, which, beginning with 'no condemnation,' ends with 'no separation.' "Who shall separate us," he asks in the last of the unanswered questions with which the chapter ends, unanswered because they answer themselves in the very asking,— "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And then having run over the dark array of separating forces, and having quoted a verse from the Psalms to show the continuity of the Church in suffering from age to age, the note of victory rings out, "nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." What a glorious thought it is that the love of God in Christ to us can make up for the separations of the present as well as for its sufferings. There are few things here on earth on which we can venture to write the words 'no separation,' yet we can inscribe them on all those things on which the love of Christ has rested. Amidst the passing away of the world and the fashion of it, our hearts leap up with gladness at the thought that "there are friendships even on earth so sacred and so deep, so well secured against all possible risk, so sure of being carried forward when time is done, unbreakable

for ever, that heaven itself will only be the proper sphere for their ever-expanding joys." There are friends on earth of whom we know that they will be our friends for ever; and there are friends gone on before us, from whom death, the great separator, has not really divided us, for they and we await the reunion of death-divided ones in the Father's house above. It is perhaps faith's greatest triumph that it finds in the doctrine of the resurrection a power which sets an imperishable seal on friendship. Two of our strongest suggestions of immortality, apart from the testimony of Christ, have been found in the broken lives and severed friendships of the world. "Instinctively," it has been said, "friendship triumphs over the grave." Yes, but, apart from Christ, with what terrible misgivings! What if, after all, death ends earth's holiest relationships? Our hearts forbid us even to ask the question; and when faith takes its great leap into the belief that *Christ* lives, we are assured that *they* live. At "the evergreen bush in the wilderness," we learn from Him that "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." And all this is most surely a victory of faith.

CHAPTER VIII.
A TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

“The greatest of these is love.”—ST. PAUL.

“So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying, O heart I made, a heart beats here !
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of Mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me, who have died for thee.”

BROWNING.

“Oh, love defying time,
Oh, heart untouched by years,
We can forget the funeral chime
When thy green wreath appears.”

MATHESON.

“Love at its highest point leads us straight to the brink of the great abyss, for it speaks to us distinctly of the infinite and of eternity. It is eminently religious: it may even become religion. Love is a faith, and one faith leads to another.”—AMIEL.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

IF the belief in immortality is a victory of Faith, it may with even greater truthfulness be regarded as a triumph of Love. Instinctively love triumphs over death. Immortal life flows from immortal love. This is the poet's name for Him who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light: "Strong Son of God, Immortal Love." It may be called the poet's argument, but it is the argument which it is most difficult to resist. It is the argument of the artist as well as the poet. In the National Gallery there are three pictures by the greatest religious artist of our time — G. F. Watts — which, taken together as forming a noble tryptich, preach a most impressive sermon on the triumph of that which has well been termed "the greatest thing in the world."

I.

The first is the allegorical painting entitled 'Love and Life,' of which Watts himself speaks as "perhaps his most direct message to the present generation." Love is depicted as a strong immortal youth gently leading Life, a slight female figure, up a steep and difficult hillside which is *never climbed but once*. He shelters her with his broad wings that the winds of heaven may not blow upon her too roughly. The late Dr. Hugh Macmillan, in his biography of Watts in the 'Temple' series, remarks the contrast between the two figures—"the youth, so reliant, so independent, and, at the same time, so kind and considerate—and the woman, who is depicted not in the full rounded beauty of womanhood, but spare and slight, and scarcely developed"—and shows that the artist has painted her as she is designedly. The moral of the picture is that she is weak and helpless in herself, and requires all the assurance and support that Love can give. The hillside which Love and Life climb together is rough with boulders: precipices yawn on every hand. Love bids Life look up to the celestial heights. She is not to look down at

the difficulties of the way, but upward to the great reward. Nor does the angel cumber her with help. Her contact with him is of the slightest. She merely lays her open palm in his hand, which does not clasp it or close around it, and the other arm is altogether free. She leans upon him, and yet barely touches his form. And all this for the purpose of calling forth her own powers, and educating them. She must be crowned with the crown of life—her own life in its highest manifestation.

II.

More touching still is the picture of 'Love and Death,' of which again the artist's interpreter says that "it is one of Watts' most finished paintings," and he tells us of the occasion which gave rise to the picture, and imparts to it a touching significance. Watts was asked to paint the portrait of a young nobleman who had all that the world could give of rank and fortune, and graces of body and mind, but who was dying of consumption. This memory so haunted the artist as ultimately to create the ideal which is fulfilled in the

picture of Death, a mighty form, draped in white, advancing to the house of life, where a fair boy meets her at the threshold, and struggles to bar her way. Every detail in the picture is full of meaning, from the blossoming roses that drop withered over the doorstep, to the turtle-dove below that moans in loneliness. Watts himself interpreted the picture, when first produced, as depicting "the progress of inevitable, but not terrible death, partially but not completely overshadowing love." "Never," says Dr. Macmillan, "did Grecian Art express so graphically the hopelessness of human love to stay the step of death. The inequality of the contest could not possibly be represented to us in a more striking manner." Yet there is nothing stern about the figure of Death. She is depicted, in the artist's words, as "the kind nurse who puts us all, as her children, to bed."

"This is the house of life, and at its door
Young Love keeps anxious watch, while outside waits
One who with firm importuning demands
An entrance. Strange is she, but Love, with lore
Taught by quick terror, names her Death ; and o'er
Love's face there comes a cloud, and the small hands
Would shut the door : for she from loveless lands
Is foe to Love, now and for evermore.

Nay, not for evermore ! Love is but young,
And young Love sees alone what youth can see ;
With age Love's vision grows more clear and strong,
And he discerns that this same Death, whom he
Had thought his foe, striving to do him wrong,
Comes with the gift of Immortality."

III.

The last of the trio is called 'Love Triumphant.' In the second, Watts has shown Love conquered by the physical form of Death, but in the third he exhibits the power of Love triumphant over Death and Time. In his picture Time and Death, having kept company throughout the ages, are depicted as overthrown, and lying prostrate at the feet of Love, which rises triumphantly and spreads immortal wings towards heaven. "They appear as two vague figures wrapped in clouds : the man half recumbent, the woman lying prone on the ground : Death in the form of the woman illumined by a bright light ; Time in the form of a man overshadowed by his own form, and knowing nothing of the secrets that are hidden in his keeping. Love is the one indestructible element of our being, and the beautiful affections of the human heart and the earthly home are not specialities of the

present life, moral exuviæ to be cast off when the spirit wings its way to eternity. We take them with us, and death can annihilate no worthy love wherein the heart rejoices." It is remarkable that in Watts' Death pictures, death is robbed of all that has made it the shadow feared of man. On his canvas are no skull and crossbones that on tombstone carvings make us shudder, but a visible embodiment of the words of M. Angelo, "If life be a pleasure, so death should also be; for it is given to us by the same Master."

In these three pictures we have then, most truly, a sermon with three heads. Their three-fold message is: that, without the aid of Love, Life could not get up the steep path that is never climbed but once; that Love tries in vain to intercept the inevitable but not terrible Death; and that over Time and Death, Love must be triumphant.

Love enables Life to climb the uphill path. For such the path of life is to us all. "Does the road wind uphill all the way? Yes, to the very end." It is a veritable Hill Difficulty to every pilgrim. Love takes the hand of the little child, and guides her over the slippery

paths of youth. Love takes the child grown woman, and throws his broad wings around her, that the rough winds may not blow upon her too wearily. Love shields the aged from the storms that rage the more sternly the nearer we get to the summit of the hill. The flowers grow in her pathway, and the air becomes finer and rarer the higher Love and Life climb hand in hand. And when the end is reached,—the sheltering House Beautiful, with its many mansions, and its resting-places for all who come, is made their final home. Such is the artist's parable of the journey which Love and Life take side by side. The way is so ordered by Him who knoweth our walking, that no one need take the journey unattended by the broad-winged protector. The love of parent and child, of brother and sister, of husband and wife, spreads its covering wings around the pilgrim, and carries him onward and upward till all his wanderings cease. It is a beautiful, a divine provision, and life, on these gracious terms, is indeed worth living. God reaches out His hand to each of us through these human agencies, and loneliness becomes impossible. And if, as is the case with some, these attendant ministries

of human love are wanting, the ministry of divine love becomes more direct and unmistakable. Our frail life is never suffered to climb the steep ascent of heaven alone. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The hands that support, the wings that encircle, the flowers that grow in the pathway of the pilgrim, are the "love that will not let us go." The everlasting arms are underneath and around us, and they are so strong and tender that we cannot fall through them. "Love never faileth." It was waiting us when we entered into this life, and it goes with us up to the last step of the journey; and when it can go with us no farther, it hands us on to a love which is stronger than itself, because it is stronger than death. For many waters cannot quench the love that accompanies us from first to last, neither can the floods drown it. It is waiting for us there as it has attended and ministered to us here. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

The second picture reminds us that Love is partially, though not completely, overshadowed by the inevitable but not unfriendly

Death. How vivid and recognisable is that picture of the fair boy who meets death on the threshold of the house, and struggles passionately to bar her way! How true it is that Love, at such a moment, may endeavour to avert, but cannot contend with the inevitable! How we struggle to keep our fairest treasures out of her grasp! And how wonderfully do we come to feel that, after all, Death is but the nurse, consoler, and perhaps, nay certainly, the mother of another life. "Then the blessed Francis, albeit that he was weighed down by his infirmities beyond his wont, yet did seem nevertheless to put on new gladness of mind, and spread out his hand toward the Lord, and said, with much cheerfulness of body and mind: 'Welcome, my sister, Death!'" But we cannot *all* or *always* welcome death. It is a rude intruder.

"Pray for me, O my friend: a visitant
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
Has never, never come to me before;
'Tis Death—O loving friend, your prayer!—'tis he,
So pray for me, my friend, who have not strength to pray."

How roughly Death pushes Love aside, ruffles and crushes his bright wings in the conflict, and weirdly awakens the moaning of the turtle-

dove! It comes to snatch the child from the arms of the mother, who fondly thinks that her love is the only safe shelter for the tender life she bore. It comes to stop the march of wedded love, and by its rude severance of those who have travelled side by side along life's rough or sunny pathway, it throws the shadow over the brightest homes, so that the roses drop withered from the doorposts, and desolation reigns where love so brightly shone. It comes to turn the music of the happiest home into a funeral dirge, and remonstrance is in vain. How heedless of love is this visitor to the house of life, as he advances, with outstretched arm, to claim his own! Yet how many have been able to see, in the light of Christ, that, though inevitable, Death is not unfriendly! And when the rude intrusion is over, and from its deserted house "Life and Thought have gone away side by side," the parent has been able to recognise that the child whom Death took in a moment has gone into safer keeping :

"O God, to Thee I yield
The gift Thou givest most precious, most divine!
Yet to what field
I must resign

His little feet
That wont to be so fleet,
I muse. O, joy to think
On what soft brink
Of flood he plucks the daffodils ;
On what enpurpled hills
He stands, Thy kiss all fresh upon his brow,
And wonders, if his father sees him now ! ”

The husband has been brought to see that the wife of his heart is his in a richer, surer possession than ever :

“ Yea, I have sought thee, yea, I have found thee,
Yea, I have thirsted for thee,
Yea, long ago with love’s band I bound thee :
Now the everlasting arms surround thee,—
Through death’s darkness I look and see,
And clasp thee to me.”

The child has been taught, in losing an earthly father, to read a tenderer, richer meaning in the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer than he had ever known before. “ So let us, abiding in the old confidence, stand upright at Thy door, O Lord and Lover of our souls, looking for the Face long desired, the Face of uttermost Love.” Yes, Death *gives* far more than he *takes*. His stroke is the blow that severs for ever between the soul and sin. His knife is that of the surgeon which wounds to heal. His touch is as the removal of the fetter that binds, and the hour of his inevitable advance

is the moment of true liberation. He delivers from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. He emancipates the slave. "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." And death is the signal for the advent of our liberation. There never lived or died a Christian to whom the character of Death did not become entirely changed. Whether he comes to us personally or relatively, we are led to see that we mistook our visitor. He seemed to be pushing love aside. He was only setting it free to live a larger, grander life. He seemed to quench the light of home. He was only lighting it where the lamps go no more out. He seemed the cruel reaper who was only cutting down. He was really the husbandman gathering the sheaves for the harvest. Yes, the artist painted rightly. Death is the inevitable, but not unfriendly visitor who only overshadows Love!

For the last of these three pictures reminds us that Love can never be wholly eclipsed. It must be triumphant in the end.

"Love still shall hold an endless reign
In earth and heaven above,
When tongues shall cease, and prophets fail,
And every gift but love."

Time and Death are overthrown together, as they have travelled together throughout the ages, but love rises on immortal wings, triumphant :

“Nor death nor life, nor earth nor hell,
Nor time’s destroying sway,
Can e’er efface us from His heart,
Or make His love decay.”

The victory of Christ is the victory of love. It triumphed, even in His lifetime, over disease and sin, and terror and care, and demons and false teachings, and death. It triumphed, in His cross, over “principalities and powers.” “And victory remains with love—Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.”

So again the artist painted well. The figure of Love, hovering over the conquered remains of Time and Death, spreading his wings for a flight to the skies, is a true conception. Does it not suggest that picture with which the gospel closes, and in which we see the Saviour of the world leading His disciples out as far as Bethany “to bless them”—and “while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up to heaven”? The ascension is love’s triumph made visible. And as it was visible once, so it shall be again. “Ye men

of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus whom ye have seen carried up to heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

CHAPTER IX.
A CONQUEST OF HOPE.

“A living hope.”—ST. PETER.

“Blessed is the man whose hope the Lord is. O Lord, the hope of Israel.”—JEREMIAH.

“If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”—ST. PAUL.

“Man is, properly speaking, based upon Hope; he has no other possession but Hope; this world of his is emphatically the place of Hope.”—CARLYLE.

“As one gets further on in life it grows in some ways easier. Tribulation worketh experience, and experience, hope; and this last hope is the happiest. It is of a very different kind from that with which we begin life: it comes most fully into our hearts when we look beyond this world, where we have already learned that most of our other expectations are kindly and wisely disappointed.”

CHAPTER IX.

A CONQUEST OF HOPE.

THE belief in immortality is a conquest of hope. "If we were asked," writes one, "to sum up the distinctive character of Christianity in a single word, that word would be hope. Hope is the outstanding feature of the Christian scheme, marking it off from every other religion and system of morals which the world has seen. The Bible is the most marvellously hopeful of books; Christ was the most marvellously hopeful of teachers; the apostles were the most marvellously hopeful of messengers." The keynote of hope is struck by St. Paul on almost every page he writes. "We were saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." St. Peter's distinctive contribution to the Christian doctrine of immortality consists in

the coining of that great phrase: "a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." St. John describes the prospect of being manifested with Christ in glory, when He appears, as "this hope." And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in a splendid mixed metaphor, we are reminded of the strong consolation we have "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil." Clear and steady, in all the Apostolic writings, rising like a bright and morning star on the horizon of our life, we may discern the 'hope of glory.' It is the dominant note in the music of the New Testament, as the note of despair may be heard in that of the Old. We need not multiply phrases, such as 'Christ our hope'—'good hope through grace,'—'Christ in you the hope of glory,'—'the patience of hope,' to justify the title of this chapter.

If the Christian view of the life everlasting is a victory of faith and a triumph of love, it is certainly a conquest of hope.

I.

What, then, is the hope of the gospel? Our Christian hope—what is it? What are its constituent elements?

Obviously it is, in one aspect of it, a hope quite out of sight. "Who hopeth for that which he seeth?" It is of the essence of hope that its object should be unseen. What, then, is the unseen object of our Christian hope? On what thing or person in the world of things unseen and eternal do we set our hope? There is and can be but one person and but one thing to hope for—to see Jesus, and to be like Him. St. John links them in his grand vision of immortality: "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Our hope, our good hope is, that in the life beyond we shall indeed 'see Jesus,' and that beholding Him, we shall be perfectly conformed to Him. To see Christ, and to be like Him, sums up our hope. In uttering that expectation, hope conquers. It has never been otherwise described by any saint of God. If we take the devotional writings of holy men, that is how

they uttered their best, their only hope. St. Augustine, as he writes on "the happiness of the soul that is freed from its earthly prison," pronounces it blessed, as being at liberty to seek the sky, and to see "Thee its most sweet Lord face to face: then shall the eyes of Thy people see Thee face to face." The hymnal paraphrase of Samuel Rutherford's words expresses it also: "the Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land." Therefore it is a hope in long perspective. It is a *timeless* hope. It does not find its resting-place, it does not reach its crown, on earth. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Christian hope wins its crown in refusing to be limited by time. Its rays may illumine time, but its focus is fixed in eternity. And so it may be asserted that the hope which conquers time and sense, and is anchored within the veil, is bound up with the redemption of man and nature from the bondage of corruption. It is while St. Paul is singing of creation's pangs, and the great joy of her approaching deliverance, that he introduces his beautiful song of hope, and says that the human soul is in travail till the hope be born which is "our adoption, to wit, the

redemption of our body." By this hope we were saved! The organism which our spirits shall inhabit when the soul is freed from its earthly prison is as unimaginable as the glorified body of Jesus Himself. "It doth not yet appear." Yet the hope of it conquers the thought and fear of dissolution. And we have it, in the earnest of the Spirit, even now. "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit."¹

To analyse this hope into what might be called its constituent elements, is impossible. The very suggestion is redolent of a chemistry which has no place in the kingdom of God. We are thankful that there are things of the Spirit which elude analysis. Yet it may be suggested that the hope by which we conquer death and the grave comprises all the elements that might be supposed to make up what St. Paul terms 'a good hope.'

No hope for the future would be entitled to be called 'good' which did not contain the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1, 5.

element of *personality*. That this enters into our Christian hope, is the feature which distinguishes it from all conceptions of the future life in which personality is ignored or deliberately rejected. Our Christian hope has nothing in common with the Buddhist's expectation of a relapse into non-existence, though this shadowy belief has had a curious modern revival. Nor can it be replaced by that essentially modern idea which goes by the name of corporate immortality. No doubt there is an element both of truth and consolation in the thought of joining an invisible choir of those whose lives in the future will be blessed by our present living. And the Christian hope makes room for all that is true in this conception. The immortality of influence, "so far from destroying, only lends a new significance and reality to the hope of personal immortality. It leaves the arguments for immortality, which reason and Christian faith suggests, precisely what they were: only it bids us think of that immortality not as a vague and shadowy state of blessedness in some unknown existence beyond the grave, but as the realisation of those possibilities of perfection which our nature contains, and

which are present here and now, ready to be elicited in the earthly life of man.”¹ But though the Christian hope of immortality can be quite hospitable to this idea, it is not the whole of our hope, or even the central element in it. It would *not* compensate me for the extinction of my personality at death, to be assured that I had gone to swell the tide of life for future generations. I cannot be satisfied without a hope for the future which does justice to *myself*, and assures me that I, a complete person, body, soul, and spirit, shall hereafter partake of the glory which rests now on Christ.

Because it is a good hope, our hope for the future has in it also the element of *spirituality*. In other words, it is the hope of communion with God. No word has been used more freely to its great loss, and even literary debasement, than the word *spirituality*. Yet it stands for a very real and recognisable quality. We know a spiritually minded person when we see him. His very look betrays him. We can tell, as by an instinct which seldom errs, that he is one whose affections are set on things above, and whose life is hid with Christ in God. For such an one the conquest of

¹ *University Sermons*, by John Caird, D.D., p. 191.

hope is the conviction that the fellowship with God, begun on earth, shall not be interrupted, still less closed, but in reality perfected by death. Nothing is so prophetic of immortality as the hours spent by a spiritual man in God's presence. This is how the Old Testament hope of immortality in its highest form was generated. "The saints of the East were not speculative men—they had no philosophy. They did not reason that the soul was immortal from its nature. They did not lay stress upon our instinctive hopes of immortality. They could not, with the patient eye of inductive observation, gather up what we call analogies to the passage of beings from a lower to a higher life, such as we conceive our own death to be. They did not reason: they felt. They *knew* that their Redeemer lived. They were safe in the arms of God. Death could not assail those who were folded to the bosom of the everlasting Life."¹

And a good hope must have in it the element of *recovery*. Nothing is so characteristic of our hope of immortality. We feel there is so much we would need to recover in the life to come—opportunities, friends, the body

¹ *Waiting upon God*, by the late A. B. Davidson, D.D., p. 102.

with which we part at death. In the Christian hope there is a promise that all these shall be recovered.

We shall recover our *opportunities*. We shall have the opportunity of repairing our failures to seize the chances which time in its swift course offered, but of which, when they slipped past, we seemed to hear a voice saying, "sleep on now, and take your rest." So Browning makes Andrea say :

"What would one have?

In heaven perhaps new chances, one chance more—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover."

This is a most consoling and inspiring thought regarding the future. There are lives which promised so well and came to so little here, that our hearts leap up with the hope that in heaven they will get new chances, one chance more—that there the reach shall *not* exceed the grasp of those who have at last found that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.

A good hope for immortality includes the prospect of the recovery of *friendships*. This

is the hope held out to us in Alford's great hymn :

“Oh then, what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore !
What knitting severed friendships up
Where partings are no more !”

Of those reunions, the mode of which is so unimaginable, but to the reality of which we cling with a conquering hope, “Christ is the abiding pledge,—Christ the uniter, who as on earth at the house of Jairus, at the bier of Nain, at the grave of Bethany,—is the joiner of parted hands and sundered lives, delivering divided ones to each other.”

And the element of recovery shall be complete when the saints shall receive their *redemption body*. “We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” For whatever mystery is involved in the thought of the future of our bodies, we are assured by the testimony of witnesses to the risen Saviour that these bodies shall be our own. In them we shall recognise ourselves and one another in an unbroken personal identity. For it is part of our hope that the heaven where we shall see Jesus as He is, and where by God's grace we shall be like Him, is not an abode of

disembodied spirits, but a home where, with bodies uncorrupted and incorruptible, we shall be for ever with the Lord, and with those who are now in that mysterious spirit world of the departed, 'with Christ.'

In every view of it, then, our Christian hope for the future is 'a good hope.' And the centre of it is Christ. "We shall see Him. We shall be like Him. With Christ, which is far better. For ever with the Lord." If we drop Christ out of our religion, we drop everything. Any hope we have for the future, and of which He is not the soul, is like a snow bridge, over which we cannot cross from time to eternity without the awful fear that it will give way beneath us. But the hope *into* which St. Paul says we were saved, rests on piers whose foundation is that of eternal rock. "Part of His host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now," on that bridge which is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." On this we also may step out in the full assurance of hope, when we have to go into the darkness and the silence.

II.

This, then, being our Christian hope, our 'good hope through grace,' what should be our present attitude towards it? There can be no doubt as to that. "If we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." *Waiting!* The most difficult of all attitudes into which the spirit of man can enter! It is hard to wait for the fulfilment of any earthly hope, and it is specially difficult the nearer its fulfilment comes. When we have for long been looking forward to the attainment of something on which we have greatly set our hearts, and it comes almost within our reach, are not the last hours of the waiting time just those during which we are most restless and impatient? The last stretch of a period of convalescence tries the invalid's patience more than the earlier stages of his disease. We have even known those in the case of whom the spirit was beginning to burst the bonds of its earthly prison, praying that the last messenger would come quickly. The Christian's hope of glory is often an eager expectation. So St. Paul felt he had to pray for Thessalonian believers: "the Lord

direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Jesus Christ."

The individual Christian, and the collective body of believers which we call the Church, must learn to wait. Creation is waiting patiently for the revealing of the sons of God, and man must learn from her what it is to tarry the Lord's leisure. For we look for a Saviour who is unresting, but unhasting. "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It is with such a Lord that Christians and the Church have to keep step.

There is more than at first meets the eye in G. F. Watts' figure of Hope, though it is so unconventional, and seems to depart so widely from all other impersonations of that quality. "Watts' Hope," writes his biographer, "is fresh and original. Indeed, it would be difficult at first sight to guess that it was meant for Hope at all. It has none of the animation or expectancy which we should imagine a figure of Hope would exhibit. But the more we gaze, the more do we enter into the profoundness of the artist's idea. Its meaning begins to dawn upon us through the dark shadows. We perceive that while the attitude is woe-begone, it is not so listless as it ap-

pears. There is a great deal of latent energy in it. It is beginning to revive, to be stirred up with fresh strength ; and though the eyes are blindfolded to indicate ignorance of the shape which Hope may assume, and the circumstances in which it may appear, the white bandage is not so tight that the eyes are altogether hidden. They can be faintly seen below it, trembling as if the least ray of light might open them and reveal the soul of joy which shines through them. The lips have a sweet sadness about them inexpressibly touching, as if she could not utter all the sorrow that is in her heart. Her countenance is not turned upward for heaven's direct light, but downward to the earth, as if to catch what reflected light it can give. The fingers of one hand are tightly clasping the frame of a simple lyre of primitive construction, all the strings of which have been broken and wound in the centre around the upper limb, with the exception of one solitary string." So the artist has conceived of Hope, a figure on the top of the world with a broken lyre in her hand, not the embodiment of a cheerful optimism, or a hope that has no uncertain note in its music ; yet a figure which, in the great conception of it, is "an eternal protest against

scepticism." Watts' conception has indeed "the sadness born of the doubt and the deep unrest characteristic of these days; but no man feels more than he the consolations and hopes that abound amid the darkness and despondency. His is a gospel of hope and not of despair. He sees that there is more day to dawn upon the world. The sun is not setting, but rising. The revealing of the sons of God in the men born of the Spirit is the consummation of the story of the earth groaning and travailing in pain together until now."¹

The note of hope, subdued, it may be, but clear and distinct, is what one misses in much of the religion of to-day. We are frequently confronted with the assertion that since some people are of a more naturally hopeful disposition than others, hope is, after all, a matter of temperament; that it is well for those who are so constituted by nature, since hope belongs to them, and others who are not so endowed are to be pitied. While we admit there is some truth in this, we must also remember that this hope is to be wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and that we must never assume

¹ *The Life Work of G. F. Watts*, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D., pp. 200-204.

that we can dispense with it. If it be a grace from God, He will give it to those who seek after it diligently and perseveringly. "It is true, indeed, that some good and true hearts will never be as bright and glad here as others will. But underlying all diversities, hidden at times from its possessor, little known to the world, shrouded in the deep recesses of the heart, there, in every true Christian, will be found the grace of hope."¹

It becomes us, therefore, to remove from the Christian religion the reproach which is so frequently cast upon it, of its being a gloomy and cheerless faith. It must be admitted that it is sometimes a deserved reproach. For those who profess to be Christ's followers do not look like it. He said they should resemble not a funeral company, but a wedding party. Yet how seldom do they make the air ring with their songs! Let them try more habitually to live under the power of the hope set before them in the gospel. Life is not to the Christian a cheerless waste, nor is death the king of terrors. We live in the kingdom of hope. For our own sake and for the sake of others, let us show ourselves

¹ *Voices of Comfort*, p. 289.

to be citizens of that country. One of the titles of our King is 'the God of hope.' Let the voice of joy and gladness be in the dwellings of the righteous. Let us abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Let the evening rainbow and the morning star, the buds of spring-time and the summer flowers, the songs of the birds, and our hymns of faith and hope, dispose us more habitually to live as those who are "looking for that glorious hope, the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Then shall the tone of individual Christians be caught up and re-echoed by the Church itself. "The Church has waited long her absent Lord to see." And the waiting has often made her weary. That is a fine story which they tell of Thomas Carlyle, that when walking with Bishop Wilberforce and speaking of the death of John Sterling, the friend of both, Carlyle suddenly asked: "Bishop, have you a creed?" "Yes," was the prelate's reply; "and what is more, the older I grow the firmer that creed becomes beneath my feet. There is only one thing that staggers me." "What is that?" asked Carlyle; and the bishop answered, "the slow progress which that

creed seems to make in the world." Carlyle remained silent for a second or two, and then said slowly and seriously, "ah, but if you have a creed, you can afford to wait." For it is true that the Christian and the Church whose creed is that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures," *can afford to wait !*

IMMORTALITY IN
LITERATURE.



CHAPTER X.
THE ATTITUDE OF SCIENCE.

“If we ask ourselves frankly how much, apart from the Christian religion, would remain of faith in God and in a future state of existence, the answer must be, very little.”—S. LAING.

“It is, in my judgment, only a superficial view of science that leads any one to assert that all the phenomena of the universe—mental as well as physical—can be explained as conditions of matter and energy. We may safely assert that our present knowledge does not warrant such a statement. Whilst, therefore, the attitude of every thinker towards many questions should be one of cautious reserve, we may rest confident in the belief that no speculations on life and death and immortality and God that crush the highest aspirations of the human soul, can rest on a scientific foundation.”—M‘KENDRICK.

“Now the things that are seen are temporal; of things that are unseen, science knows nothing, and has at present no means of knowing anything.”—OSLER.

CHAPTER X.

THE ATTITUDE OF SCIENCE.

“ **I**N the thinking of civilised men there has been for years a steady ebb from the shores of another life. The causes of this are very discernible. There was bound to be a reaction from the excessive other-worldliness of the first half of last century : men had grown sick of its glare. Their hearts easily yielded to new tendencies, drawing with irresistible force the conscience and the reverence of men upon the present visible environment of their lives. Science claimed our wonder and expectation for the opening secrets of the material universe : and not only the individual's future, but his present, which is the only measure and warrant of his future, shrank to nothing before the vastness of forces which rolled on their way indifferent to him and his fate. For a time the great social movements of the age seemed to come

to the rescue of the individual with a gospel of duties and hopes above the material course of nature.”¹ These words present a recognisable picture of the attitude of very many to questions regarding a future life during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The writer is also correct in emphasising “the strong enthusiasm and unselfish service which the idea of a corporate immortality has roused in numbers of the best men and women, irrespective of their own salvation.” If to this we add the dominion of the secular in all spheres of life, the haunting sense of uncertainty as to personal immortality, and, in some cases, the cessation of the very desire to live, we have a pretty full account of the general disregard of a life beyond the grave which prevailed until recently. The idea of ordering the present life in the interests of the life to come was regarded by many in the closing decades of last century as ‘a specious form of selfish individualism.’

But there are many signs that this spell of indifference on the subject of the future has now been broken. “There are thousands

¹ *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, by G. A. Smith, D.D., p. 209.

who would give all they possess for one irrefragable proof of the existence of the other world." People in the most unlikely circles are asking,—a friend was recently startled by his gardener stopping in the midst of his work and putting the question to him,—‘what about immortality?’

The interest in this all-important subject in its broadest aspect can never fade away, for it is the interest of life itself. It may be maintained that religion becomes a more practical thing when it is associated with efforts of social reform than when reflecting on man's destiny. Yet it is a fact that if we lose sight of the vital connection between our faith and our eternal future, we dwarf and impoverish both our religion and the human life to which we try to minister. “This appreciation of the value of life now and here, of its possibilities, of the seemingly cruel and unnecessary obstacles which lie in the way of their fulfilment, has its own dangers. Not to speak for the moment of those which are more purely spiritual, the fact that so large a proportion of hope, effort, or desire are concentrated on the life that now is, is productive of an over eagerness for visible

results which is apt to defeat its own end. There would be less of the unrest, the unwise haste, the disappointment, which too often characterise and impede workers in the cause of social regeneration, if they were able to realise that even in the case of individuals there is a larger hope, a wider outlook, than this present life affords.”¹

We must, however, keep before our minds a clear conception of that aspect of the subject which has this primary and commanding interest. The central question is, shall I survive the shock of death? It is in this elementary form that it appeals to all of us. And our discussion in these pages has gone to show that Jesus Christ has given the final answer to it. “The question of a future life confessedly transcends the limits of scientific demonstration. It is not likely that we shall ever succeed in making the immortality of the soul a matter of scientific demonstration, for we lack the requisite data. It must ever remain an affair of religion rather than of science.”² “Immortality obviously cannot be proved.

¹ *Individual Immortality*, by E. M. Caillard, p. 3.

² *Man's Destiny*, by John Fiske, p. 109 ; Fiske's *Excursions of an Evolutionist*, p. 291.

No amount of argument will ever prove immortality. To awake alive after having died, is the only absolute demonstration. The realisation of immortality is not reached as the result of logical reasoning, but rather as a consciousness, a spiritual apprehension, and, above all, from living one's way into the spiritual realities, so that one knows that he is in touch with the Eternal, and cannot die."¹ But we have to account for the persistence of many a belief of which we cannot give a scientific demonstration. Having surveyed the Christian evidence, we now come to consider some of the features of the thought of our time which make for, if they cannot altogether establish, the fact of personal immortality.

I.

We must consider the attitude of science to immortality. For, though the life to come is 'an affair of religion rather than of science,' we are concerned to know whether science can prove a negative; whether this belief in the life everlasting, which is so tenaciously held by most men, and so strongly suggested

¹ *Immortality a Rational Faith*, by William Chester, p. 16.

by the voices of our hearts, is contradicted by science. Is there 'a scientific presumption against the persistence of individual life after death'? And what do we mean by science? Primarily, of course, we mean physical science. For, though there is a science of metaphysics as truly as of physics, yet it is of physical science we naturally think as a possible foe of our hope of immortality.

Time was when physical science was its most formidable assailant. Twenty years ago, Professor Drummond could say: "Science meets the entire conception of immortality with a direct negative."¹ That was the time when Vogt asserted that "Physiology decides definitely and categorically against individual immortality, as against any separate existence of the soul."² And it was just twenty years ago that Professor Graham asserted: "Such is the argument of science, seemingly against a future life. As we listen to her array of syllogisms, our hearts die within us."³ The attitude of the physical scientist is very different to-day. "No scientific man," writes

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 222 (3rd ed.).

² Quoted by Drummond, p. 223.

³ *The Creed of Science*, p. 169.

Professor M'Kendrick, "so far as I know, 'sitteth in the seat of the scornful': no one permits himself to scoff at religious men or religious thought: and, if anything, there is an underlying feeling of regret that one cannot adopt beliefs that seem so helpful for time and so hopeful for eternity. Many scientific men, therefore, take up the position of a reverent agnosticism."¹ There are, of course, some who go much further than this, and who say they are convinced that we are nearing the time when 'the rehabilitation of the great facts of religion will come from the side of science.' Be that as it may, the attitude even of 'reverent agnosticism' is much to be thankful for. It contrasts sharply with the attitude of flat denial which was given to the idea of immortality by the physical scientist a quarter of a century ago, when we were confidently told that thought was 'a motion of matter,' and 'consciousness a physiological function of the brain.' It is reassuring to be told that "science gives no warrant for rash negative assertions. Her light may be dim when projected into the future, and she may have little positive information to give on such

¹ *Science and Faith*, pp. 4-6.

questions, but at all events she does not deny.”¹ That is all one can look for from physical science. It never can prove, but it is much that it has ceased to try to disprove, the fact of personal immortality.² That attitude clears the way for the investigation to proceed on other lines.

It is the wise as well as the reverent attitude for the physical scientist to assume, because the present condition of investigation into the nature of matter prevents its statements having in them the note of finality. Instead of materialising spirit, the profoundest science to-day spiritualises matter. Speaking of the Röntgen and Becquerel rays, Sir William Crookes said recently : “ All these observations find internal connection in the discovery of radium, which probably is the basis of the coarser chemical elements here. Probably masses of molecules dissolve themselves into the ether waves of the universe or into electrical energy. Thus we stand on the border-line where matter and force pass into

¹ *Science and Faith*, p. 64.

² This seems to be the position taken by Professor Osler in *Science and Immortality*, which has been published since this chapter was written.

each other. In this border-land lie the greatest scientific problems of the future. Here lie the final realities, wide-reaching and marvellous." In view of these tentative statements as to the ultimate identity of force and matter, physical science may well take at least a neutral attitude to such a faith as that of immortality. If the physical scientist is very nearly joining hands with the idealist in philosophy, and may soon declare that there is no such thing as that which men call matter, but only 'energy,' 'force,' as the basis of life, plainly there is room for a spiritual explanation of the universe and of man's destiny. "It is not so much the body that has a mind as it is the mind that has a body, which is proved by the overwhelming dominance of mind over matter."

Some of the greatest representatives of science in modern times, such as the late Herbert Spencer, have felt themselves compelled, in the interests of science itself, to postulate the continual presence and the constant persistence of a central force behind phenomena, which, itself incomprehensible, comprehends all. This is the chief factor in the evolution of the higher nature of man; and the fact that it has to be

assumed is at least a corroboration of a view of the universe which leaves room for his immortality. For if man, on the higher side of his nature, is linked to this central force, he is allied to that which *is* immortal. If *it* persists through all changes, and is immortal, man, on the higher side of his nature, being allied to this force, must also be immortal. It comes to this, therefore, that science may not point to the immortality of the soul, but it does point to the immortality of that which makes the soul. Similarly, and more recently, Sir Oliver Lodge said that, to his mind, the conception of a world-soul intimately connected with our own, is the most reasonable explanation of things as they are. In the admission of such a force, or world-soul, as the explanation of the process by which things have come to be, there is a meeting-point between faith and science.

But, of course, it is possible to attach too much importance to the utterances of individual representatives of modern physical science. The fact of certain men being exact scientists and believers, does not establish a real connection between faith and science. It is, however, impressive to find such a scientist

as Lord Rayleigh inscribing on the title-page of his collected papers, the text : " The works of the Lord are great : sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." In the world of physical science there will always be some who say : " a scientist is likely to realise more clearly than other kinds of people that, as regards evidence and proofs, theological matters stand on a different—shall we say more shaky ?—plane than matters scientific." But we are surely getting beyond this point. For the limitation of the term science to the physical sphere is itself unscientific. Men are coming to realise that an idea, an aspiration, an ascertained religious experience, is as truly a *fact* as gravitation or the conservation of energy. The facts of experience are as really facts as those of scientific demonstration. " Science does not occupy herself with the physical alone. The phenomena of mind as well as body fall within her ken. Facts, whether psychical or physical, are material for science." ¹ Formerly, science recognised only physical facts and forces : now, she recognises psychological facts as worthy to be collated, reckoned with, and treated as material for induction. But we

¹ *Individual Immortality*, p. 20.

must be careful to remember that the inductive is not the only kind of proof. We must also bear in mind that the facts which are the raw material of science are located in space and time. Therefore the question of immortality is really out of the realm of physical science. Nor has modern psychology much to contribute to the solution of our problem. One thing must be emphasised and pressed, that in relation to the problems connected with life beyond death, we must keep quite clear of certain so-called scientific allies. Such a book as the late F. W. H. Myers' *Human Personality surviving Death* is interesting, and must be treated with respect. The value of his investigations is to show that "the world of mind is infinitely more complex than was suspected"; and though his theory of the sub-conscious self is carried so far as to overlook and even destroy the unity of self-consciousness, yet "the *facts* are of first-rate scientific importance: and we venture to think that the investigation and testing of them—whatever be the fate of Myers' explanation of them—has disproved on experimental grounds the supposition that the existence of mind depends on the mechanism of nerve and brain, as

physiological science understands these terms.”¹ But in so far as it is allied with what is known as ‘spiritualism,’ it is to be suspected. The alliance extends only to the phenomena investigated, for Mr. Myers and Professor James think that their theory of the sub-liminal self, and its irruptions into the sphere of everyday life, is a more excellent way. But when modern writers, with the view of uniting faith and science, say confidently, “in view of physical phenomena as yet unaccounted for; in view of thought transference, mental suggestion, and telepathy,”—we must give pause, and insist that there is no nourishment for the Christian faith of immortality, and no real scientific value in such imaginings. Let us keep an open eye, by all means, for what is really convincing in science; but let us beware of attempts to ‘pick the lock.’

II.

There is another way in which science corroborates if it does not prove the fact of human immortality, and this brings us to consider what light is shed upon the problem by

¹ *Vide Hibbert Journal*, July 1904, “Present Aspects of the Problem of Immortality,” by S. H. Mellone, D.Sc.

the doctrine of evolution. "That the conception of evolution points to a life beyond, is at least not denied by some of its most earnest advocates."¹ Let us be careful to note that the point now under discussion is the relation between the doctrine of immortality and evolution, not materialism or agnosticism. For, while the doctrine of evolution has often been closely allied to both, there is no inherent connection between them. Although Spencer was at once one of the greatest of agnostics and of evolutionists, the two elements of his theory of the universe are quite separable. And though, as in Haeckel's writings, evolution has often been allied with a materialistic view of the world, we must beware of supposing a necessary connection between them. Many thoroughgoing evolutionists are certainly not materialists in the strict sense,—that is, men who hold that psychical phenomena can be interpreted in terms of matter and motion; and many evolutionists are not, in the strict sense of that term, agnostics,—that is, men who hold that we do not possess any power which is capable of transcending the limits of sense, or

¹ *Studies in Theology*, by J. Estlin Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed, p. 119.

surpassing the boundaries of finite experience. An evolutionist may be an idealist or even a theist in his theory of the universe. There are many distinctively Christian teachers who, while they hold in suspense their ultimate acceptance of evolution, regard it as being so separable alike from agnosticism and materialism, that they are able to say that, as theologians, they feel no jealousy of the scientific doctrine of evolution, but are rather disposed to think that the old faith can live with the new. "I conclude," wrote Professor Bruce, "that the modern doctrine of evolution does not rob the Christian of his God."¹ So also Dr. Martineau: "Science discloses the method of the world, but not its cause: Religion, its cause, but not its method."²

Is there, then, anything in the doctrine of evolution that contradicts the belief in personal immortality? Of course, it is only the outer fringe of the subject that can be affected, either one way or other, by the answer. We do not expect the evolutionist to pronounce on such secondary questions as the nature of the future

¹ *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, by A. B. Bruce, D.D., p. 32.

² Martineau's *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, p. 178.

of the soul, or its mode of existence, or the region in which it may live hereafter. But is there anything in evolution which can prove a negative to personal immortality? Does the link of continuity between the animal and man preclude the belief? "Science," it is said, "has brought the human species into the general circle of the animal kingdom in a sense far more deep and essential than was formerly dreamed of."¹ But to this it may be replied, that many of those who regard the whole nature of man, psychical as well as physical, as coming under the sweep of an evolutionary process, admit that, when we come to civilised man, "while there is an extreme physical similarity, there is an enormous psychical divergence between man and the group of animals to which he traces his pedigree."² That is to say, we may grant that the human mind runs exactly parallel with the mind of the animal up to the point at which the power of intellect appears, and that this superadded power of intellect has been due to a process of continued evolution. But the fact that from that point physical variations have ceased to be important, and psychical changes, resulting in

¹ *Creed of Science*, p. 183.

² *Man's Destiny*, p. 30.

the increased size and structure of the brain and all the features which distinguish self-conscious man, have become all-important, makes a world of difference, and justifies Fiske's notable assertion: "on the Darwinian theory it is impossible that any creature, zoologically distinct from man, or superior to him, should ever in the future exist upon the earth."¹ It is, of course, open to treat this inference which Fiske draws from the facts before him as an assumption, and to ascribe it to his poetic temperament carrying him further than his philosophy strictly applied would admit. But the facts from which he draws the inference are beyond dispute, that physical variation gave way to psychical variation at the appearance of man, or at the appearance of intellect in man. If that feature differentiates him from his animal ancestors, it at least makes it inadmissible for the evolutionist to say that he must stand or fall with them. We are safe to assert, therefore, that the mere fact of a link of continuity between the animal world and man does not of itself militate against his immortality. At this point, however, we encounter a difficulty which, as usual, has been urged most forcibly

¹ *Man's Destiny*, p. 31.

by Professor Drummond. "No secular theory of personal continuance," he says, "does not equally demand the eternity of the brute. No secular theory defines the point in the chain of evolution at which organisms became endowed with immortality."¹ It was largely on the ground of what he has thus stated that Professor Drummond threw over any doctrine of natural immortality, and fell back on the purely religious position that eternal life is the gift of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord. As it is a gift only to a few, Drummond appeared to many to lay, in his doctrine of eternal life, a distinct basis for the conception known as 'conditional immortality.' But though Drummond made an unsatisfactory escape from the difficulty, yet he certainly hit upon one which is acknowledged, and not very successfully surmounted by evolutionists who believe in personal immortality. At what point in the evolutionary process do organisms become possessed of immortality? Fiske says: "Speaking for myself, I can see no insuperable difficulty in the notion that at some point in the evolution of humanity this Divine spark (by which is meant the soul) may have acquired sufficient con-

¹ *Natural Law*, p. 227.

centration and steadiness to survive the wreck of material forms, and endure for ever.”¹ That is a very rhetorical statement, but it is important as an admission on the part of a thoroughgoing evolutionist of a principle of immortality in man. And perhaps we press inquiry too far, when, with Drummond, we demand to know *at what point* the organism becomes possessed of this endowment. Anyhow, because we cannot have the question definitely answered, we are not inclined, as he does, to capitulate. For this is just a point at which, where science fails, philosophy comes to the rescue, and argues that in a world of intelligible relations, self-consciousness involves a continuous future. When the superadded powers of intellect supervene, man has certainly become possessed of that principle of immortality which, whatever science may or may not say, is demanded as a postulate of thought.

III.

Is the life everlasting imperilled by the place which, on the evolution theory, man occupies in nature? Is man, in other words, the goal

¹ *Man's Destiny*, p. 117.

of the evolutionary process? There are those who hold that "there is something like a general law discoverable in the history of species; that they all have their term of years, though the term is usually a long one; and that probably, therefore, the human species itself, as well as all other existing species, will disappear, giving rise to wholly different though derivative forms of life"¹ If this be so, it would seem as if humanity had been dethroned, and become a mere incident in an endless series of changes. It would be open, therefore, to hold that the same process of evolution which has produced man might by and by produce something far more nearly perfect. To some, evolution seems to teach, not merely that our little systems have their day and cease to be, but that our race itself is having its day, and will also cease to be. But are there sufficient grounds for cherishing this fear? Is it part and parcel of the theory of evolution that man must disappear and make way for some higher creature? Is it not competent for an evolutionist to argue, as Fiske does, that humanity is the goal of the process of evolution, and that the future of humanity will be not its disappear-

¹ Graham, *Creed of Science*, p. 183.

ance, but its perfection? "The dominant aspect of evolution," he thinks, "is to be, not the genesis of species, but the progress of civilisation."¹ On what is this opinion based? On a study of what the evolutionary process has been. Its history has been a development of the family from which man has come, through a long series of variations both physical and psychical, till a point was reached when psychical changes became the more significant and important; and in process of time another point was reached at which physical variation ceased, and psychical changes were alone regarded as significant. The fact is that man is, *zoologically*, similar, but *psychically*, superior to the group of animals to which his pedigree has been traced. To what conclusion do these facts point? To this surely, that the human species is destined not to be superseded, but perfected. From the date of the appearance of intellect in man, the evolutionary process was destined to go on in the psychical sphere, and its result, for which the term of life on this planet must be utterly inadequate, is the perfecting of humanity. We may therefore conclude that evolution has placed man on a

¹ *Man's Destiny*, p. 30.

higher plane than ever, and that, "so far from degrading humanity, or putting it on a level with the animal world in general, the doctrine of evolution shows us distinctly for the first time how the creation and the perfecting of man is the goal toward which nature's work has been tending from the first.¹" If we follow this interesting argument, we must be sensible of its immense importance in relation to the question of man's destiny. Biological reasoning against immortality can be valid only if it can be shown that humanity is not the goal of the process of evolution, but simply an incident in it. Granting that man is the end of the process, and that the future of humanity is to be not disappearance, but perfection, we have a strong probability furnished by science towards the belief in immortality. "For my own part, therefore," Fiske concludes, "I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept the demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work. To deny immortality is to rob the whole process of its meaning."² The reasonableness of God's work! In other words, the uniformity of

¹ *Man's Destiny*, p. 107.

² *Ibid.* p. 116.

nature and the law of sufficient reason are at one in demanding the continued existence of free beings.

Thus from the side of science we obtain a very important confirmation of our belief in a future life; for if the future of evolution is to be, not the genesis of species, but the progress of civilisation, an infinite future is necessary in order to the perfection of humanity. This conception was anticipated, as most modern scientific conceptions were, by Browning. Speaking of the perfection of Grecian Art, in 'Old Pictures in Florence,' he says :

"To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us—and more;
They are perfect—why not? they shall never change,
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store."

It was in the same spirit that, when Coleridge had unfolded his scheme of universal culture to Leigh Hunt, he said: "that means a thousand years at college." The very inability of our faculties to grasp immortality becomes another ground of our belief in it. Man has within him that which is itself a promise of eternity, of that infinite future in which God's work, done as the evolutionist declares it to have been, shall be brought to final perfection. "And

were these grounds lighter than they are, yet as a small weight will make a scale descend, when there is nothing in the opposite scale, . . . so in the scale of immortality slight reasons are in effect weighty, and sufficient to determine the judgment, there being no counterweight, no reasons against them, and no facts in proof of the contrary.”¹

¹ Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection*.

CHAPTER XI.
THE VERDICT OF PHILOSOPHY.

“Quid vero si tota hæc brevis vita non nisi longum quoddam somnium esset nosque moriendo evigilaremus?”—LEIBNITZ.

“The highest concept which man forms of himself is as detached from the body.”—JOWETT.

“This frame compacted with transcendent skill,

Waxes and wastes : I call it *mine*, not *me*.
New matter still the mouldering mass sustains :
The mansion changed, the tenant still remains.”

ARBUTHNOT.

“Personality is not the largest, but it is the highest fact in the known cosmos : and if death has power over it, there is nothing which death spares : it can undo the utmost which the divine will has wrought.”—MARTINEAU.

“O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and the heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee.”—ST. AUGUSTINE.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VERDICT OF PHILOSOPHY.

WHAT is the verdict of Philosophy regarding immortality? According to certain writers, notably the late Professor Drummond, it has nothing to say at all. He maintained that the question of a future life is biological, not philosophical. This statement largely vitiated the argument of his brilliant but inconclusive work. Philosophy has a distinct claim to be called as a witness before the doctrine of immortality is disposed of. For, though philosophy cannot prove immortality to a demonstration any more than science can, it has had, and will always have, much to say that is at least corroborative of the Christian belief in the life everlasting.

I.

Philosophy can step in between the materialist and the assumption that the life of the soul

ends with the life of the body ; that the dissolution of the bodily organism carries with it the final dissolution of our consciousness. It is entitled to assert, and except in cases in which it has a bias towards positivism it does say, that such an issue of our present life would be a violation of the rational interpretation of the universe. It is almost an axiom of modern logic, that everything which enters into our world of organised experience must be capable of being expressed in terms of thought. "God," it has been said, "will not put us to permanent intellectual confusion." The principle of sufficient reason is a factor in the problem, and compels us to affirm that a being with the possibilities of man, who is destined never to reach perfection, is a conception which violates the fundamental laws of philosophy.

It is very difficult to arrive at a negative conclusion regarding immortality on philosophical grounds. As a matter of fact, we have to seek for the widespread disbelief in a future life of people in our day elsewhere than in their philosophy. There is no doubt as to the waning faith in immortality in our time. It is not merely disbelieved by men of the world, who never think about the matter. Even

apparently pious church members are practically losing hold of the article in our Creed, 'I believe in the life everlasting.' This is probably due in part to the worldly tone of their own religious life, which the growing conformity of the church itself to worldly ideas is doing much to foster. But there are also many who have dismissed it from their attention because of a haunting doubt as to the fact, and because they say they have had enough of living, and do not welcome the prospect of beginning again at death. In short, most people are unwilling to inquire what lies beyond the end at all.

This does not in the least affect the verdict of philosophy. It may have only a small contribution to make towards the solution of the problem. Philosophical discussion of the abstract question of the immortality of the soul is largely academic. In that line it can scarcely go further than Butler went, and he was ready to admit the possibility that there is even a natural immortality of brutes.¹ But we need not therefore conclude, with Drummond, that immortality is not a question of thought, or volition, or emotion surviving death, but of the union of the individual soul with Him who

¹ Cf. James' *Human Immortality*, p. 69.

only hath immortality. That is to assert that eternal life is a gift, and not an inalienable possession of mankind. And that, in turn, is to capitulate to the doctrine of 'conditional immortality.' The problem of personal immortality, not in the academic sense of the immortality of the soul, but of the urgent question, shall I survive the shock of death, is one which the philosopher will always have an interest in discussing, and a voice in settling, on the ground that the denial of it would be subversive of the fundamental principle of thought.

Let it be observed that this is more than the mere reassertion of the famous dictum of Kant, that immortality is "a necessary postulate of the practical reason." Kant was led to that view in the attempt to escape from 'the web of scepticism' by which he had surrounded himself in the realm of 'the pure reason.' Having capitulated there, he took refuge in the assumption that it is in the moral consciousness, in the sphere of the practical reason, we are to seek and find objective reality. It must "stand to Kant's credit that here at least in its gravest moods he trusted the human mind." But, in regard to immortality, it led him to take the

view that, because the lower nature of man is not subject to his higher nature, endless ages are necessary to effect his submission to conscience. "We cannot wonder that Hegel poured contempt upon this way of proving immortality not by what is actually or potentially good in man, but by alleged limits which eternally separate him from goodness."¹ Yet Kant had a living interest in the hope of immortality, which is more than Hegel seems to have had.²

An interesting return to the Kantian position by the most modern school of psychology has a distinct bearing on our problem. It is variously called the *pragmatic* and the *humanist* school, which means that truths should have practical consequences, and that the truth of a statement consists in its consequences. As Professor James expresses it: a truth is to be tested by its *fruits*, not its *roots*. Its English representatives have come into an exciting verbal collision with those of the older school of British Hegelians. When the dust of the conflict has cleared, it will become apparent that the new psychologists have much to say

¹ *Hegel and Hegelianism*, by R. Mackintosh, D.D., p. 58.

² "The highest stage in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* is the healing art; and its highest attainment is—death." *Ibid.* p. 174.

for themselves, and that there is every reason why an idealist should treat their arguments hospitably. Stated briefly, their position seems to be that the sanctions of a truth lie in the very texture of experience, and that the only truth for us will be that way of thinking to which our experience shuts us up. Of course, there is a danger in putting it thus, as if truth were *altogether* what each man 'troweth.' It is, in philosophy, what in the Ritschlian theology is known as a theory of 'value judgments.' Immortality is, philosophically, more than a 'value judgment.' The position taken by the idealist as compared with the modern pragmatist is that of T. H. Green in his *Fragment on Immortality*: "the immortality of the soul, as equivalent to the eternity of thought and the being of God, is the absolute first and the absolute whole. To deny the immortality of the soul in this sense is to maintain the destructibility of thought, and this is a contradiction in terms."¹ That goes further than either Kant's 'postulate of the practical reason' or the 'value judgment' of the modern humanist. But, in so far as the new movement has emphasised the fact that

¹ Green's *Works*, iii. 159.

truth has consequences, by calling attention to "the all-pervasive purposiveness of human conduct," it represents a healthy reaction from 'the misty ambiguities' of Hegelianism, and is probably not inconsistent with a deeper and more thorough metaphysic. In its bearing on such a truth as immortality, it suggests that this belief must be put to the test of experience, to which all religious beliefs must be subjected, and must thus be lifted out of the region of mere academic discussion. To use the language of the school, does the belief of immortality 'work'? Do its "sanctions lie in the texture of experience"?¹ On these lines one might certainly build a strong argument for immortality. Such considerations as the universality of the belief,² its union with the philosophical doctrine of personality, the analogies which are discoverable in nature and life, its innate persistence as a human belief,—are all arguments drawn from experience, and they go to establish immortality, not as a mere value judgment, in the strict sense of that term, but as a truth which most emphatically 'has consequences.'

¹ *Vide Mind*, October 1904. Schiller on *Humanism*.

² Cf. Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection*.

II.

But the verdict of philosophy regarding immortality may be gathered by taking another point of view. We must take into account the question of personality. Most philosophers teach, certainly the idealist philosophy teaches, that personality is the ultimate reality. Every person is, in a certain sense, a universe. Every person, therefore, has infinite value, and is conscious of eternal possibilities.

“Man *is* a soul, and he *has* a body.”

“But the soul is not the body, and the breath
Is not the flute,
Both together make the music: either marred
And all is mute.”

Philosophy challenges those who would disprove the hope of immortality to account for the consciousness of personal identity. Why do I believe myself to be to-day the same person I was twenty years ago? The body I now wear was not in existence then. It has been broken up and reconstructed within that time. It is transformed several times in the course of an average life. We are told

that we are unclothed and clothed upon every seven years. Yet we retain throughout life an unbroken sense of personal identity. Not only do we discriminate even in this life between our bodily possessions and ourselves. We draw the same distinction between ourselves and our experiences—not our sensations only, but our higher experiences, our hopes, our fears, our aspirations. “I call these also mine, not me.” What does this prove, or, at least, indicate? Surely that man can distinguish between himself and what are his. Certainly it suggests that the material organism is not the man, but that consciousness and personality are the ultimate realities. To imagine the dissolution of these at death *would* put us to permanent intellectual confusion.

In a variety of ways the fact of personality becomes a promise and potency of immortality. But we must realise what personality means. And here let it be said that as a philosophical doctrine it is at present in danger at the hands of its friends. Speculations as to the divisible character of personality through the doctrine, now become current, of a ‘subliminal self’ which makes irruptions into the sphere of consciousness, tends to a splitting up of

personality for which there is no philosophical justification, and no evidence save that which is gathered from a somewhat doubtful empiricism. The doctrine of a divided self may furnish a fresh weapon by which to wound, if not slay, our consciousness of immortality. It is, however, most important to realise that we shall not arrive at a sound conception of personality by ignoring the feelings and studying merely the abstract intelligence. "The self which love prizes is the self who is a particular embodiment of universal reason, not barely as intellect, but as intellect, will, and love. By an analysis of knowledge you cannot penetrate the Holy Land of personality — God's or man's."¹ Personality has an inherent ethical worth which carries with it the promise of eternal life. This gives the individual a meaning not for himself only, but for God. If human personality has a meaning for God, the loss of his self-consciousness through death would be to God a loss, the permission of which would be inconceivable. "From the philosophic standpoint death is of peculiarly small significance, a mere accident

¹ *Hegel and Hegelianism*, by R. Mackintosh, D.D., p. 181.

of the temporal order, with which alone it has any concern.”¹ When viewed as possessing ethical, and not merely intellectual elements, personality really covers the question of immortality. For the most part, therefore, it may be said that philosophy, unless it be sensational or positivist in character, declines to answer in the negative the question, Shall I survive the shock of death?

Personality affords the strongest proof in favour of immortality which philosophy can produce. There are corroborative lines of argument, not so strictly philosophical, yet which fall in with what has been advanced. The fragmentary character of this life, whether viewed intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually, the undeveloped potentialities of human nature, our innate consciousness of the indestructible character of our mental and spiritual faculties, are all, especially that which has been last named, part of a cumulative philosophical proof of immortality. When a great mind is taken from this world, it is not merely love that cries out for his immortality, but the irresistible question, to what purpose were such waste? Thus Matthew Arnold, though

¹ *Individual Immortality*, p. 69.

his attitude to this belief was often hesitating, addressed his father in death :

“Oh strong soul, by what shore
 Tarriest thou now? For that force
 Surely has not been left vain !
 Somewhere, surely, afar
 In the sounding labour house vast
 Of being, is practised that strength,
 Zealous, beneficent, firm.”

It may also be said that it is philosophical as well as poetical to speak of ‘instincts of immortality,’ and ‘immortal longings.’ These, too, come from ‘the abysmal deeps of personality.’ ‘God hath set eternity in our hearts.’ ‘The more we drink, the more we thirst.’

“Thus I know
 This earth is not my sphere ;
 For I cannot so narrow me
 But that I still exceed it.”

Immortality has its truest witness in the principle of love. We are immortal because love is immortal. But that belongs to the testimony of poetry.

When we try to sum up the evidence of philosophy, we are led to the conclusion that most of what it has to say was said before Christ. Plato gave the verdict of philosophy

in asking, "Can the soul which desires and is capable of knowledge, which is essentially vital, which has the power of remembering, reasoning, commanding, be perishable?" His discussion of the immortality of the soul is worthy of being termed "the greatest contribution drawn from philosophical speculation to the problem of immortality." But at the best it offered immortality only to the philosopher, and it was an immortality for only the half of man. With this reserve, it may be said that the Platonic conception goes as far as philosophy can take us.¹ Neither science nor philosophy can speak the final word. At the best, their testimony can only be corroborative. And in very many cases it is hesitating. Jowett said, at one time, "the more we think

¹ "Such belief as the Greek people had in a future existence was the product of their poetry and philosophy rather than of their religion. Hence it happened that, while the speculative thought of Greece provided the most systematic proof and the loftiest exposition of the soul's immortality, the people as a whole kept by the old mythologies, and faith in that higher immortality never became cordial or general. Another characteristic of the Greek idea of the future was its neutral or non-ethical tenor. As it entered little into Greek worship, it also counted little as a moral force telling on Greek life." Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 96, fifth edition. Cp. chapter entitled *Belief in Immortality* in Prof. Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 501.

of reason as the highest thing in the world, and of man as a rational being, the more disposed we shall be to think of human beings as immortal." Yet it is a melancholy fact that some of his letters near the close of his life indicate that his faith for the future had become dim and faint. One remembers the pathetic last word on the subject which was spoken by Herbert Spencer. "My position was . . . that on the one hand there is no evidence supporting the belief in immortality, and on the other that there is no evidence to warrant denial of it."¹ Immortality comes to us, not on the authority of the philosopher, still less of the scientist, but of Him in whom the power of an endless life was finally revealed.

¹ *Autobiography*, ii. 379.

CHAPTER XII.
THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY.

“Never the spirit was born : the spirit will cease to be never :
Never was time when it was not, end and beginning are
dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for
ever :
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it
seems.”

THE SONG CELESTIAL.

“If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time. I press God’s lamp
Close to my breast : its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.”

“The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false.”

BROWNING.

“The sun conceals more worlds than he reveals :
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life ?”

“Man is a being of high aspirations, looking before and after, whose thoughts wander through eternity, disclaiming alliance with transience and decay, existing but in the future and the past : being not what he is, but what he has been and shall be.”—SHELLEY’S *LIFE*, BY DOWDEN.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY.

IF the testimony of science and the verdict of philosophy regarding the fact of personal immortality are more or less hesitating and doubtful, there is a clear note of certainty in the language of poetry. The witness of the poets to immortality is so abundant, that it is only a fragment of it which can be dealt with in a single chapter. The verse of Tennyson and Browning throbs with the conscious certainty of the life everlasting. For that is how one naturally expresses the witness of the poets; it is a heart-throb rather than an explicit message. A competent critic of both these religious thinkers in song has said: "Whatever then, in this matter of religion, the man as thinker may confess, the man as poet keeps in the realm of the undefined, beyond analysis, beyond reasoning. When he does not, when he is tempted into analytic

discussion, into doctrinal definition, he ceases to be a poet for the time, and the trouble into which he gets is pitiable. When Milton argues like a school divine, when Wordsworth draws out a plan of education, when Byron explains his view of original sin, how sad it is, how the Muses cover their faces, how angrily Apollo frowns! Even Dante, who was obliged to do something of this kind of work, does it only as a means by which he may launch himself forward into the infinite. And Tennyson rarely in this way lost his position as an artist. There is no formulated creed in his work."¹ Neither is there in that of Browning. While he wrote several purely religious poems, yet most of his suggestive and fruitful thoughts about religion, and his finest gleams of insight into spiritual truth, are scattered throughout his shorter works. It is impossible to reduce the poet's religious teachings to a system, their chief value being that they transcend all system.

What one finds in Tennyson and Browning are not final opinions on religion,—to them this is not a world of finalities of any kind,—

¹ Tennyson, *His Art and Relation to Modern Life*, by Stopford A. Brooke, p. 21.

but gleams of insight into the religious side of life, utterances glowing with the poet's manifest sympathy with Christian ideas. Neither of these great poets cared much for formulations of belief. And there are critics of both poets, but especially of Browning, who maintain that we are reading into their poetry what we wish as Christians to find in it, when we speak of their relation to Christianity. Yet the admissions of other candid expositors put their distinctive position on this point beyond question. Thus it is said of Tennyson: "When we come to 'In Memoriam,' we have before us a poem exceedingly personal and distinctly theological: and Christ is called there 'The Life Indeed': His power to raise the dead is confessed: He is the receiver of the souls of the dead into the world beyond this world: He is the Word of God that breathed human breath and wrought out the faith with human deeds. . . . There is no clear doctrinal definition of the person or the work of Christ. What is *not* left vague, what is quite clear, is that Tennyson is more Christian than Theist: that no mere Theist could have said the things that he has said in 'In Memoriam.'"¹ And of Browning:

¹ Brooke, *Tennyson*, p. 24.

"Holding no brief from any of the Churches, he comes forward to boldly call the science and philosophy of the day back to religion, declaring that Love, God's Love, is the only thing that can keep the intellect of man from madness, as the brain must cease to perform its work effectively when the heart's work is imperfectly done. He re-states Christianity on its earliest, simplest, and too forgotten lines, contests the ground for an exalted Theism of the noblest kind, and proclaims that the great truths of Christianity rest upon philosophical and scientific foundations; that though the superstructures built on them by some Churches and some theologians are too often weak, the great truths of God, the soul, and the future life, remain amid all the storm of adverse criticism unharmed by a single wave that has beaten upon them." ¹

I.

The position taken by Tennyson in regard to the belief in personal immortality is unmistakable, and its history in his own mind is quite traceable. Tennyson is one to whom

¹ Browning, *Message to his Time*, by Edward Berdoe, p. 20.

personal immortality is a simple inference from the truths of the Fatherhood of God, and of the relation in which every man stands to Him as a son. If God is, as Christ taught, 'our nearest relation,' and if that relationship be a personal one, then our immortality is secured. This was Tennyson's position, owing to the circumstances of his time; it was round this question of immortality that Tennyson's relation to Christianity revolved. It is not to be supposed that this was always with the poet an unshaken belief; he had to fight for it. It is more or less a problem in many of his poems. But whether he is raising it on the basis of the question, is life worth living, in 'The Two Voices'; or as the problem of sorrow in 'In Memoriam'; or as a polemic against eternal punishment in 'Despair'; or as a growing hope in 'By an Evolutionist,' in which he sees Man stand "on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher"; or, finally, as 'the first clear cry of a happy faith' in 'Crossing the Bar,'—he is still reaching the conclusion that "the face of Death is toward the Sun of Life—his truer name is 'Onward.'"¹ If Tennyson has a

¹ *De Profundis* should also be remembered. "Birth is the coming to land from that deep: death the re-embarking on the

manifesto on this subject, of course it is 'In Memoriam.' Again and again, in that poem, which has done so much to strengthen the hope of immortality in hearts where it was burning low, Tennyson's note is that of death passing into life, of loss passing into love, and that is the secret of its unfading interest. Quotations are needless, and would be endless, but there is one stanza—cxxix.—which is so typical of the entire thought of the poem, that we may repeat its familiar lines :

“Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
 So far, so near in woe and weal;
 O loved the most, when most I feel
 There is a lower and a higher ;

 Known and unknown ; human, divine ;
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye ;
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
 Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine ;

 Strange friend, past, present, and to be ;
 Loved deeplier, darklier understood ;
 Behold, I dream a dream of good,
 And mingle all the world with thee.”

'In Memoriam' is a strong testimony to the fact that the problem of the future life cannot be solved in the region of argument.

same infinite sea, for the home of truth and light.” *Problems and Persons*, by Wilfrid Ward, p. 224.

It is by a poet's intuition that Tennyson attains his conviction that his friend is alive, because Arthur's being is mingling with his own. He found them both by a sublime leap of faith: "God, and his friend, in God." It is in the same spirit that he says in his journal: "I do not feel that she is dead. I cannot imagine the world without my mother."

II.

One can find on almost every page of Browning's poetry suggestions of immortality. From the throbbing agitation which beats in 'Prospice,' through the whole circle of his love poems, until, in his swan-song, he broke forth as one ready to greet the unseen with a cheer,—we are conscious of the same note, which we can catch as truly in one quotation as in a hundred: "God is—and the soul is—and, as certain after death shall be." Browning's ever recurring thought about the future is, that the brokenness and limited opportunity of the present demand a 'beyond.' Take, for instance, that saddest of his poems, 'Andrea del Sarto,' in which he utters the familiar

words so often quoted, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

This may be called the dominant note in Browning's song in regard to immortality. And the striking thing is that his pathetic utterances about limited opportunities, shattered ideals, and broken hopes are free from the slightest taint of pessimism. He believed, as he made Pippa sing at daybreak, that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." There is infinite pathos in Browning's verse, but no pessimism, no sickening despair of life, no doubt as to its aims and uses. In his view of life the brokenness of the present and the limit of its opportunity demand a great ideal. That is the thought—and it recurs continually—which redeems Browning's poetry from the slightest taint of pessimism. "We are faulty—why not?—we have time in store." That is to Browning, as Westcott said, "the basis of a firm belief in the continuity of a personal life through death." Probably the finest of Browning's poems is 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'; and the drift of it is, that if life is to be estimated rightly, it must be taken as a whole. Man must be looked at as the complex being

he is, flesh and spirit each claiming due recognition, in order that life may yield its proper result ; and thus one finds the best kind of optimism in the poem. As the poet sings of life, the best of which 'is yet to be,' he starts in one's mind such thoughts as these : imperfection is the condition of growth, and acknowledged failure is the promise of future achievement. And thus the poet's spirit stretches out towards immortality. Failure, or, as he expresses it in another of his poems, 'apparent failure,' with its suggestion, its almost proof of a heaven of opportunity for those who have nobly failed on earth, is a thought that beats in almost every page of Browning's poetry. There is a twofold reason for that failure. It springs partly from 'the corruption of man's heart,' and partly from the want of necessary outward help. In the latter case the failure is due to others, and the soul that has so failed must be consoled with the thought of the immortality of work. In the former case the cause of the failure lies in man himself, and should become the starting-point of moral discipline. It carries with it a warning against the limitation of our desires to this world. The punishment of such limitation

is the gratification of these desires, as in the case of the soul depicted in 'Easter Day' who on earth had 'minded earthly things,' to whom therefore it is said :

"Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit : glut
Thy sense upon the world : 'tis thine
For ever—take it."

Thus failure from causes within one's self should become a starting-point for higher effort and a longer reach. And if it becomes a point from which the soul presses onward, 'burns upward to the point of bliss,' the vision of a boundless future opens up, because 'the best is yet to be, the last of life for which the first was made.' And this carries with it the hope, which the poet holds with all the certainty of a conviction, of the continuity of personal life through death. So he makes them sing at the 'Grammarian's Funeral' :

"Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes :
Live now or never !'
He said, 'what's time? leave Now for dogs and apes !
Man has Forever.'"

In a word, in Browning's thought another life is needed to remedy the evils and failures of this one. The human soul instinctively

demands another—and there is another—in which man may carry to perfection the unfinished work of earth.

“ There shall never be one lost good ! what was, shall live as before,

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more :

On earth the broken arcs ; in heaven the perfect round.”

Possibly it might be said that this is true of the earlier poems, but that in his later works Browning was less hopeful and more hesitating in his utterances about the future. One critic takes up this position. Referring to a poem written in 1887 — ‘ La Saisiaz ’ — in which Browning sings, ‘ so I hope—no more than hope, but hope,’ he says : “ This, then, is his last word on Immortality, hope.”¹ But was it any more to St. Paul ? Can it ever be more to anybody than a hope—a hope which amounts to a belief, ‘ a conquest of hope,’ but still only a hope ? “ By hope we were saved ; but hope that is seen is not hope : for who hopeth for that which he seeth ? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”² It is special pleading to argue

¹ *Browning Society's Papers*, pt. iv. p. 453.

² Rom. viii. 24, 25.

that the teaching of Browning's early poems is superseded by that of his later works. The truth rather seems to be that in his later poems there is more restfulness, less storm and agitation, than in the earlier ones. Perhaps Browning's most thrilling word about the future is 'Prospice,' which is one of his later poems; and in it there is a steadier, more real and abiding consciousness of faith in immortality than in many of the more palpitating verses of his earlier work.

But the crowning proof that Browning's belief in personal immortality did not fade as time went on—that the gloominess one feels in 'La Saisiaz' was only a passing mood—is the epilogue to 'Asolando.' There was something consummate in the appearance, on the very day of the poet's death, of a volume in the closing lines of which he bids men 'greet the unseen with a cheer.' The sublime confidence of 'Prospice' suffered no abatement as the end drew near.

" At the midnight in the silence of the sleep time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think imprisoned,—
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
 —Pity me?

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time,
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
'Strive and thrive'! cry 'Speed—fight on, for ever
There as here!'"

So the testimony of 'the two voices' of last century regarding the life everlasting may be summed up in the single phrase, 'a triumph of love.' "God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!" The immortality of love carries with it the immortality of life. The key to Browning's religion is, in the opinion of one of his critics, his treatment of the principle of love. "He is driven by ethics into philosophy, and by morality into religion. It is this that gives value to his view of moral progress as reaching beyond death to a higher stage of being, for which man's attainments in this life are only preliminary. By lifting the moral ideal of man to infinitude, the poet has identified it with the nature of God, and made it the absolute law of things. Now this idea of the identity of the human and divine is a perfectly familiar Christian idea. The meeting-point of God and man is love. Love, in other words, is for the poet the supreme principle both of morality and religion. 'All's love, yet all's

law.' The idea of love solves for Browning all the enigmas of human life and thought."¹

This suggests a closing word. In regard to the whole question, there is, if we may so say, immortality *and* immortality, the immortality of *intensity*, and the immortality of *duration*. It is one thing to be conscious, through the principle of love, of the present possession of eternal life, and quite another to have the expectation of living on for ever. Manifestly the immortality which is reached now by a strenuous, intense effort of the soul, impelled by love, is a very different thing from the conception of mere duration, which is as conceivable in the case of the animal as in that of man. "Higher," says Emerson, "than the question of our duration, is the question of our deserving. Immortality will come to such as are fit for it, and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now."²

¹ *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, by Henry Jones, chapter vi.

² Emerson's *Complete Works*: 'Worship,' p. 410.

INDEX.

- ANALOGIES of resurrection, 106.
 Animal immortality, Butler and James on, 235.
 Annihilation, no support in O.T., 11.
 Assumptions of Jesus, 32-33.
 Browning, Robert, Greek Art and humanity, 151, 229; opportunities recovered, 195; on immortality, 255-262.
 Bruce, A. B., Christianity and historical facts, 55; 'surgery of events,' 62; theft theory discredited, 66; resurrection a fact and a mystery, 68; not jealous of evolution, 221.
 Carlyle, and Margaret Fuller, 127; and Bishop Wilberforce, 203.
 Chester, William, *Immortality a Rational Faith*, 211, 215.
 Christ, the message of, 25-47; His reserve, 32; His final word, 34; a message, not an opinion, 38; Christ risen the proof of immortality, 43.
 Conditional immortality, inference from St. Paul's silence, 83; Drummond and, 224.
 Conversion of St. Paul naturalised, 78-79.
 Corporate immortality, 193, 208.
 Davidson, A. B., 90th Psalm, 6; downfall of Jewish State, 13; immortality and religion, 16, 194; 17th Psalm, 19; sin and death, 121; 'life,' 122.
 Death, of Christ, atoning, 128; representative, 130; victorious over sin, 131.
 Death, O.T. protest against, 20; coming of Christ in, 46; sting of, 117 ff.; penalty of sin, 121; synonym for future doom, 122; sacrament of sin, 123; 'Sister Death,' 179; overthrown by love, 183.
 Dods, Marcus, Christ preparing a place, 40; St. Paul's visions, 63; future of the natural body, 83, 109; the incarnation, 137; future of the body in Christ, 138.
 Drummond, Henry, negative attitude of science, 212; a biological difficulty, 224; future life a biological question, 233.
 Easter faith and message, 51-56.
 Evolution makes for immortality, 220; is not materialism or agnosticism, 220; goal of, 226-230.
Fact of Christ, 27-30.
 Faith, a victory of, 155 f.; Watts' figure of, 157-158.

- Fiske, John, immortality not demonstrable, 210; goal of evolution in man, 227-230.
- Gospel, Fourth, views of J. Drummond and Wendt, 34-35.
- Graham, W., *Creed of Science*, 212, 222, 226.
- Greek conceptions, Sheol and Hades, 10 (footnote); death the soul's release, 74.
- Herrmann, Wilhelm, *Faith and Morals*, 28.
- Holy Spirit and resurrection, 88-89.
- Hope, its timelessness, 190; constituents of, 191-197; Watts' figure of, 200.
- Hutton, R. H., evidence for Christ's resurrection, 65.
- Jowett, Benjamin, 31, 246.
- Kennedy, H. A. A., *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, St. Paul's conversion, 91; natural analogies, 107; 'death,' 122; unity of the world, 123.
- M'Kendrick, John G., *Science and Faith*, attitude of scientific men, 213-214.
- Martineau, James, 53, 221.
- Morality, national, and immortality, 142-145.
- Old Testament and the life everlasting: two possible opinions, 3; significance of Sheol, 8; national and individual immortality, 12, 21; communion with God immortality, 17; resurrection of body, 22.
- Other-worldliness, 11, 15, 207.
- Paganism, presentiments of immortality in, 25, 37, 38;
- v.* Judaism, 152; *v.* Christianity, 152.
- Paul, St., his conversion, 78; value of his testimony, 75-78; inferential argument, 84-87; spiritual body, 100-110; the end, 111; sin and death, 118; final restitution, 150.
- Personality, personal identity of risen Christ, 59, 108; revival of Buddhism, 192; personality in philosophy, 240-244.
- Plato, the ideal State, 146; verdict of philosophy, 245.
- Pragmatism, 237-239.
- Psalms, immortality in the 16th, 17th, 49th, 73rd, 18, 19.
- Rabbinical speculations, 103-104.
- Restitution, final, 150-151.
- Resurrection, Old Testament doctrine of, 22.
- Resurrection of Christ, apparent incredibility, 42-44; theories of, 55 f.; evidence of, 65 f.
- Resurrection of the body, resting on risen Christ, 77; doctrine of the, 100 ff.
- Retribution, O.T. doctrine of, 13.
- Salmond, S. D. F., *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, Sheol and Hades, 10; immortality assumed by Christ, 32; Christ the resurrection and life, 33; relation of life to resurrection, 89; mysticism of St. Paul, 91; ransom of creation, 150; Greek faith, 245.
- Science and immortality, attitude of scientific men, 213; verdicts not final, 214-215; field of scientific induction, 217-218.
- Sheol, Hebrew doctrine of, 8-11, 18, 21.
- Smith, George Adam, *Isaiah, Modern Criticism*, etc., 7, 11, 207.
- Socrates and Jesus, 36-38.

- Spencer, Herbert, doctrine of central force, 215, autobiography, 246.
- Spiritualism, etc., Christ's silence condemns, 32; cannot account for appearances of risen Christ, 61; photism theory of St. Paul's conversion, 79; Myers' *Human Personality*, etc., 218-219.
- State, Jewish, the downfall of, 13.
- Tennyson, Lord, message on immortality, 251 f.
- Unseen Universe*, 17.
- Watts, G. F., Faith, 157; Love, Life, Death, 172 ff.; Hope, 199.
- Westcott, B. F., *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, 135, 136, 147, 151, 161.

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